JUNE

Adventure

15 CENTS

SCHWEINEER
DAN SMITH

MY ADVENTURES WITH YOUR MONEY

Who got it—and how

By George Graham Rice

This month the whirlwind promotions of the Sullivan Trust Co.
and the facts about the Goldfield Consolidated in the era of

MINING-STOCK MADNESS

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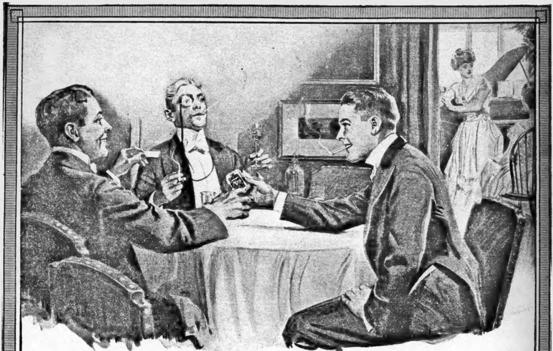
THE RIDGWAY COMPANY PUBLISHERS OF EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE



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SMOKING TOBACCO

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GENUINE
DURHAM
Smoking Tobacco
W. T. BLACKWELL & CO.
Durham, N.C.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY

Vol. 2
Adventure
No. 2

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ADVENTURE for JULY

Fact and Fiction —All Good

Did you or any one you know ever buy mining stocks as a result of alluring advertisements? ***"My Adventures with Your Money,"*** by George Graham Rice, now running in ***ADVENTURE,*** proves to be the magazine sensation of the year. It is an "inside story" of events that touched every community in the United States.

In the July ***ADVENTURE,*** Mr. Rice tells of the terrific smash in Goldfield securities and the collapse of the Greenwater mining-stock bubble, which cost the public over $300,000,000.

A year later there ensued the Rawhide rush, which exceeded in intensity that to any other gold-mining camp in North America, barring the Klondike only. Mr. Rice, through his publicity measures, was in large degree personally responsible for the stampede which caused 30,000 men to cross the desert to Rawhide, and he tells just how modern mining-camp boomers arouse public interest in their schemes.

The July story covers a period of two years and the loss of hundreds of millions by the American public. It is probably the most instructive chapter of ***"My Adventures with Your Money"*** yet furnished to investors in mining stocks. It brings Mr. Rice's mining-stock activities to Wall Street and furnishes a groundwork for the coming narrative of transactions by Eastern mining-stock promoters of the higher class, in which Western methods appear tame by contrast.

"The Road," a romance of American railway building in the Balkans, by Frank Savile, a splendid new serial beginning in the July number, is equally distinguished in its own field. It is full of action and plot, love and adventure in ideal proportions.

Readers will be glad to know that Carmelita Sofia McCann, soldier of fortune in petticoats, reappears in a snappy story, ***"Easy Money,"*** by Clarice Vallette McCauley.

"The House in the Deep Shadow" is another "Gray Ghost" story. ***"The Planter's Plate"*** is a novelty in horse-race fiction, ***"The Price of a Pearl"*** is a story of counterfeit money and a pretty girl, and then there are a dozen other typical good adventure yarns, truth and fiction, detective, cowboy, mystery, humor, love, and the rest, and a big complete novel to top off the measure.

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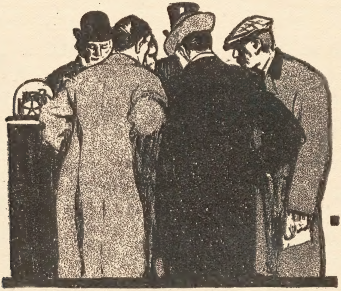

MY ADVENTURES WITH YOUR MONEY III

THE GOLDFIELD MINING-STOCK BOOM AT ITS HEIGHT

By
GEORGE GRAHAM RICE

EDITOR'S NOTE—Even to-day there are signs that the Summer will see another sensational boom in a remote mining field, with a flood of promotion stocks thrown to the public through the usual methods. George Graham Rice, Master Adventurer in Popular Finance, is making revelations in this series of articles that should be worth millions in money saved to American investors. The same keen insight that made him a vital factor in the spectacular boom in Nevada mining stocks is now at your service to take you behind the scenes in promotion-land, and the story is told with the same graphic pen that wrote alluring advertisements and literally put new mining camps on the map overnight. In the May ADVENTURE, Mr. Rice told how he got into the mining-stock game. In this instalment he tells the illuminating tale of Bullfrog Rush, the inside facts about the Gans-Nelson prize fight—a new wrinkle in mining promotion—and the true story of Goldfield Consolidated, with its accompanying incidents of money madness. Senators and sporting-men, governors and gamblers, financiers and frauds, intermingle in the big story. Most important of all, it is full of the things that you yourself want to know.

THE place was Goldfield. The time February, 1906. The boom in mining shares of the new Nevada gold camp of Manhattan was at its meridian. Riches had rolled into my lap as a result of the one Manhattan mining

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promotion in which I figured for the first time as promoter.

I was flushed with success. The L. M. Sullivan Trust Company, just organized by me, swung into business. Mr. Sullivan was president and putative head. I was vice-president and—boss.

The paid-up cash capital of the trust company was $250,000. This represented the joint profits of L. M. Sullivan and myself in the whirlwind promotion of the Jumping Jack Manhattan Mining Company and of some quick-as-lightning speculation in other Manhattan mining securities. The entire capital had been got together within thirty days, and all of it represented profits.

Mr. Sullivan was principal owner in the Palace gambling house, the second largest institution of its kind in Goldfield. Everybody in camp knew this. Mr. Sullivan's gambling-house affiliation was not, however, considered a drawback to the trust company. George Wingfield, vice-president and heaviest stockholder of the richest bank in Goldfield, was a gambler, and Mr. Wingfield also owned extensive interests in the mines. Owners of gambling places stood as much for financial solidity in Goldfield as did savings-bank directors in the East.

As for myself, I was unafraid. I vowed I would henceforth prove an exception to the mining-camp rule and quit all forms of gambling. My new position demanded this.

And I found it easy to obey the self-imposed inhibition. Soon the stock-market operations of the trust company gave my speculative instinct all the vent it could possibly have craved under any circumstances.

A few days later the sobering sense which impelled me to resolve that I must absent myself from gaming tables evolved into a stern ambition to accomplish big things for the trust company. I went about my business like a man who sees dazzling before him a golden scepter and who is imbued with the idea that if he exerts the power he can grasp the prize. It had been agreed that the trust company would specialize in the promotion of mining companies, and I determined that the trust company should conduct its business as a trust company ought.

John Douglas Campbell, known on the desert as plain "Jack" Campbell, was engaged by the trust company as its mining adviser and mine manager. We agreed to pay him a salary of $20,000 a year, with a bonus of stock in every new mining company we promoted, a stipend which was later found to be equivalent to $50,000 a year.

Mr. Campbell had been identified with Tonopah and Goldfield mining interests for three years, and was favorably known. For eight years before coming to Tonopah he was employed as a mining superintendent in Colorado by Sam Newhouse, the multi-millionaire mine operator of Utah. In Colorado Mr. Campbell's reputation had been good. On coming to Tonopah he was employed by John McKane, then associated with Charles M. Schwab. Later he was placed in charge of the Kernick and Fuller-McDonald leases on the Jumbo mine of Goldfield from which, during a year's time, $1,000,000 in gold was taken out. After that Mr. Campbell took hold of the Quartzite lease at Diamondfield, near Goldfield, and he produced $200,000 in a few months from that holding. He followed this up by a record production from the famous Reilly lease on the Florence mine of Goldfield, amounting to $650,000 in two months. It was within thirty days of the date of expiry of the Reilly lease that Mr. Campbell was induced to take charge of the mining department of the trust company.

MR. CAMPBELL'S advent as our mine manager was immediately reflected in the stock market by the advance of Jumping Jack Manhattan Mining Company shares, which were now regularly listed on the San Francisco Stock & Exchange Board, to 40 cents per share, up 15 points from the promotion price. The sharp rise wrought an undoubted sensation in stock-market circles. Brokers in the cities who had sold Jumping Jack to their customers clamored for a new Sullivan promotion. Any new mining venture for which the trust company would stand sponsor was assured of heavy subscription and a broad public market.

TRYING IT ON THE STRAY DOG

THE Stray Dog Manhattan mine was furnishing daily sensations in the way of frequent strikes of fabulously rich ore. I urged that, no matter how small the profit, the Sullivan Trust Company should begin its corporate career with the promotion of a property as good as the Stray Dog. The Stray Dog was for sale—at a price. One interest, of 350,000 shares, owned by Vermilyea, Edmonds & Stanley, the law firm of highest standing in Goldfield, could be acquired at 45 cents a share, and another interest, of 350,000 shares, owned by prospectors who had located the ground, could be had at 20 cents a share, all or none. The remainder of the stock was in the treasury of the company. The total demanded for 700,000 shares of ownership stock was $227,500, all cash. A likely property adjoining the Stray Dog, known as the Indian Camp, could be purchased for $50,000 in its entirety. We knew that as soon as it should become known that we had bought the Stray Dog, the value of Indian Camp ground would double, and we therefore decided to annex the Indian Camp at the same time we took over the Stray Dog.

The proposed outlay amounted to more money than we had, and I looked about for assistance. Henry Peery, a Salt Lake mining man of substance, had been negotiating for the Stray Dog in the interest of Utah bankers. We agreed that Mr. Peery should be allowed to participate on the basis of a one-third interest for him, and a two-thirds interest for the trust company. Besides supplying his quota of the cash needed to swing the deal, Mr. Peery agreed to furnish a president for the company, who, he said, interested himself occasionally in his mining enterprises. This was Henry McCornick, the Salt Lake banker, son of the head of the firm of McCornick & Company, reputed to be the richest private bankers west of the Mississippi River. The deal was made.

We immediately proceeded to promote the Stray Dog Manhattan Mining Company at 45 cents per share, the average cost to us of the stock being 32½ cents. It was impossible for any huge profit to accrue in Stray Dog on any such margin as 12½ cents per share between our cost price and the selling price, because the expense of promotion appeared bound almost to equal this. We figured that any promotion profits must come out of the Indian Camp. The Indian Camp was capitalized for 1,000,000 shares, 650,000 of which were paid over to the trust company and to Mr. Peery for the property. The remaining 350,000 shares were placed in the treasury of the company to be sold for purposes of mine development. The average per share cost to the trust company of the ownership stock was a fraction less than 8 cents. We decided that as soon as the Stray Dog was promoted we would offer Indian Camp shares on a basis of 20 cents per share net to the brokers and 25 cents to the public, and looked forward, if successful, to gaining about $75,000 net on both ventures.

IMMEDIATELY on taking over the control of Stray Dog and Indian Camp the trust company purchased treasury stock in each of these companies, and put a large force of men to work to open up the properties. Within thirty days of the incorporation of the trust company Gold Hill in Manhattan, on which were located the Stray Dog, Jumping Jack and Indian Camp, swarmed with miners. The orders given to Engineer "Jack" Campbell were to put a man to work wherever he could employ one, and to be unsparing in expense so long as he could obtain results. Towering gallows-frames and 25-horsepower gasoline engines were installed and other necessary mining equipment ordered shipped to the properties. Blacksmith shops, bunk-houses and storehouses were erected on the ground. Day and night shifts of miners were employed. In order to guarantee the constant presence on the properties of the engineer in charge, the Sullivan Trust Company built a $6,000 dwelling house on Indian Camp ground.

Having convinced the natives that we were in dead earnest about our mine-making intentions, we busied ourselves offering Stray Dog stock for subscription at 45 cents per share. It was well known around the camp that we had paid 45 cents per share for one block of 350,000 shares, and mining-camp followers were among the first to subscribe for the stock. Then an effort was made to dispose of quantities of it to the Eastern public by advertising and through mining-stock brokers.

That advertising campaign was approached with considerable caution. In the first place, the subscription price of Stray Dog, 45 cents, was 20 cents higher than that of any other advertised promotion which had yet been made from either the Goldfield or Manhattan camps; and in the second place, the conduct of a mining-stock promotion campaign by a banking institution appeared to me to justify more than ordinary care. There were other factors that entered for the first time in Goldfield, too.

The initial successes of the big display advertising campaigns directed from Goldfield appeared to have been due to the fact that the American public had greeted mining-stock speculation as filling a long-felt want, namely, a channel for speculation in which they could indulge their gambling spirit with comparatively limited resources —resources that were insufficient to give them a "look-in" on the big exchanges where the high-priced rails and industrials are traded in.

ADVERTISING FOR THINKERS

HAVING "tried on the dog" my methods of advertising for nearly two years, that is to say, having conducted an advertising agency for mine promoters, and learned the business with their money, I had passed through the experimental stage and now marshalled a cardinal principle or two that I decided must guide me in the operations in which I had become more directly interested.

I resolved never to allow an advertisement to go out of the office that was unconvincing to a thinker. If my argument convinces the man of affairs, I determined, it will certainly succeed with the man of no affairs.

Dogmatically expressed, the idea was this:

Never appeal to the intelligence of fools, no matter how easily they may part with their money. Turn your batteries on the thinking ones and convince them, and the unthinking are bound to follow.

That principle was applied to the *argument* of the advertisement.

The headlines were constructed on an entirely different principle, namely, to be positive to an extreme.

The Bible was my exemplar. It says, "It is" or "It was," "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not," and the Bible rarely explains or tells why.

The strength of a headline lies in its positiveness.

The logic which directed that the flaring headline of my big display advertising copy embrace a very positive statement, and that the *argument* which followed in small type be convincing to the thinker, was based on a recognition of the fact that, while boldness of statement invariably attracts attention, analysis is the final resort of the thinker before becoming convinced.

More circumspection was used also in the matter of selecting media for the advertising. Newspapers that did not publish in their news columns mining-stock quotations of issues traded in on the New York Curb, the Boston Stock Exchange, the Boston Curb, the Salt Lake Stock Exchange or the San Francisco Stock Exchange were taboo, on the theory that by this time trading in mining stocks had grown sufficiently popular to command a regular following, and that it was easier to appeal to those who had some experience in mining-stock speculation than to those who had never before ventured.

Subsequent advertising campaigns were always conducted from this viewpoint. I did not set the ocean on fire with my Stray Dog promotion, the advertising campaign of which was conducted on these lines, but this was due to circumstances which I explain further on. Later, when the Sullivan Trust Company grew and prospered, and afterward when I reached the East and learned more and more of the inside mechanism of the big Wall Street promotion game in rails and industrials as well as mining stocks, I became absolute in my opinion that my publicity principles were right.

The mighty powers on Wall Street recognize the fact that it is not in the nature of things that fools should have much money, and thinkers, not fools, are the quarry of the successful, modern-day promoter, high or low, honest or dishonest.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and the man who thinks he knows it all because he has accumulated much money in his own pet business enterprise is the typical personage on whom the dishonest modern-day promoter trains his batteries.

The honest promoter aims at both the thinker who thinks he knows, but doesn't, and the thinker who really does know. He is compelled to appeal to both classes because the membership of the first outnumbers that of the second in the proportion of about 10,000 to 1.

In fine, to use the parlance of the gambler, *all* promoters, on and off Wall Street, *of necessity* deal for suckers.

THE initial Stray Dog and Indian Camp promotion campaign was only half successful at the outset. About 650,000 shares of Stray Dog and 350,000 shares of Indian Camp had been disposed of when the Manhattan boom began to lose its intensity. Promotions had been made a little too rapidly for public digestion. There were more miners at work than ever in the Manhattan camp, but the demand for securities was not keeping pace with the supply. Manhattan's initial boom appeared to be flattening out just as Goldfield's first boom had.

We met with a setback from another direction. Henry McCornick's banking connections in Salt Lake objected to the use of his name as president of the Stray Dog. At the very height of our advertising campaign Mr. McCornick resigned. We elected our engineer, "Jack" Campbell, president, but the damage was done.

YES, "BUSINESS IS BUSINESS"

THE offices of the trust company were furnished on an elaborate scale, resembling the interior of a banking institution of a large city. The offices became the headquarters of Eastern mining-stock brokers whenever they arrived in camp.

One morning J. C. Weir, a New York mining-stock broker, whose firm held an option from the trust company on 100,000 shares of Stray Dog stock, was ensconced in one of the two luxuriously furnished rooms used as executive offices. Mr. Weir's firm was one of our selling agents in New York. He was the dean of mining-stock brokers in New York City. In those early days the telephone service of Goldfield was not yet perfected, and it was only necessary for a person, in order to overhear any talk over the telephone, to lift the receiver from the nearest hook and listen. It was reported to me that Mr. Weir had been availing himself of this method of learning things at first hand.

"Say, Rice," said Mr. Sullivan one morning, "Weir hears your messages every time you are called on the 'phone. He takes advantage of you. I wish you would let me fix him."

"All right; what do you want to do?" I answered.

"Say," said Mr. Sullivan, "Campbell, our engineer, is in Manhattan. I'll call him up from the public station and tell him to 'phone you some red-hot news about mine developments on Stray Dog, and I'll see to it that Weir is in his office at the time you get the message. If Weir don't grab a big block of Stray Dog on the strength of it, I'm a poor guesser."

All of our options to brokers were to expire on the 15th of March and this was the 13th.

At four o'clock in the afternoon I was in my room. Mr. Weir was at the desk in the room opposite. The 'phone bell rang.

"Hello," I said, "who is this?"

"Campbell, at Manhattan," was the response.

"What's the news, Jack?" I asked.

"We've just struck six feet of $2,000 ore! It's a whale! Never saw a mine as big as this one in my life! Don't sell any more Stray Dog under $5 a share!" shouted Mr. Campbell.

"Bully, Jack," I said, "but keep that information to yourself. Don't tell your mother, and don't let any more miners go down the shaft. Close it up until I am able to buy back some of the stock I sold so cheap."

Fifteen minutes later Mr. Sullivan and I met Mr. Weir leaving the room.

"Weir," said I, "your option on Stray Dog expires on the 15th at noon. So far, your New York office has ordered only 85,000 shares of the 100,000 that were allotted to you. We have decided to close subscriptions on the moment and wish you would wire your New York office not to sell any more."

"You are wrong," said Mr. Weir; "why, when I left New York we had oversold our entire allotment! If the office has not notified you of this, it has been a slip. We will, in fact, need at least 25,000 shares more than have been ordered."

"You can't have them," said I.

"Not in a thousand years!" put in Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Weir sent a bunch of code messages to New York. All the next day Mr. Sullivan spent with Mr. Weir. He allowed Mr. Weir to cajole him into letting him have the entire block of stock. Finally, it was agreed between Mr. Weir and Mr. Sullivan that Mr. Sullivan would give him the additional stock whether I consented or not. Surreptitiously, according to Mr. Weir's idea, Mr. Sullivan was yielding to him, without my knowledge and against my wishes.

Next day the Sullivan Trust Company shipped to Mr. Weir's firm in New York 25,000 shares of Stray Dog attached to draft at 45 cents a share. The draft was paid. Mr. Weir must have burned his fingers by the operation.

A FEW weeks after this, and at a period when Manhattan's initial boom was easing off, San Francisco was destroyed by earthquake and fire. Not less than half of the capital invested in Manhattan stocks had come out of the city of San Francisco, where Manhattan was in much higher favor even than in the East. The earthquake was fatal to Manhattan. The San Francisco Stock Exchange, which was the principal market for Manhattan mining shares, was compelled to discontinue business for over two months. Brokers and transfer companies lost their records, and the public's property and money loss was so appalling that no more money was forthcoming from the Coast for mining enterprises. Every bank in Nevada closed down, just as every California bank did, the Governors of both States declaring a series of legal holidays to enable the financial institutions to gain time. Nevada banks, as a rule, had cleared through San Francisco banks, and there was much money tied up by the catastrophe.

The Sullivan Trust Company faced a crisis. I had decided it was good business to lend support to Jumping Jack in the stock market when the Manhattan boom began to relax from its first tension, and had accumulated several hundred thousand shares at an average of 35 cents. The Trust company had only $8,000 in gold in its vaults on the day of the 'quake. Moneys deposited in bank were not available. Of the $8,000 in gold coin, $6,500 was paid two days after the earthquake to the Wells-Fargo Express Company for an automobile which was in transit at the time, and for which Wells-Fargo demanded the coin. It was impossible to hypothecate securities of any description in Nevada or San Francisco.

With the Sullivan Trust Company's funds tied up in closed-up banks, and with an unsalable line of securites in its vaults, it was "up against it." For a period it looked as if we must go to the wall. For two months we eked out a bare subsistence by the direct sale of Manhattan securities at reduced prices to the Eastern brokers. This purchasing power came largely from brokers who were "short" of stocks to the public on commitments made at a much higher range of prices and needed the actual certificates for deliveries.

It took the Nevada banks and the San Francisco Stock Exchange more than sixty days to rehabilitate themselves. No sooner did the San Francisco Stock Exchange open for business than it became possible for the Sullivan Trust Company to borrow some much needed cash on Manhattan securities, of which it had a plethora. Through members of the San Francisco Stock Exchange, it obtained in this way in the neighborhood of $100,000. Goldfield banks supplied another $100,000 a little later by the same process.

FORTUNES THAT WERE MISSED

ABOUT this time the Mohawk of Goldfield began to give indications of being the wonderful treasure-house it has since proved to be. Hayes and Monnette, who owned a lease on a small section of the property, had struck high-grade ore and were producing at the rate of $3,000 per day. A few weeks later it was reported that the output had increased to $5,000 a day.

The Mohawk being situated only a stone's throw from the Combination mine, the idea that the Mohawk might turn out to be another Combination was common in Goldfield. Hayes and Monnette were startled—almost frightened—at their success. Yielding for the moment to the warning of friends, who urged upon them the possibility of the ore soon pinching out, Hayes and Monnette called at the offices of the Trust Company and offered to sell their lease, which had six months to run, for $200,000 cash and $400,000 to be taken out of the net proceeds of the ore.

"I will take it," I said.

I sent over to the State Bank & Trust Company, and had a check certified for the $200,000. I was about to close the deal, when Mr. Sullivan and "Jack" Campbell protested.

"I ought to have fifteen days to examine the mine," urged Mr. Campbell.

"It is too big a chance to take," declared Mr. Sullivan.

When appealed to, Hayes and Monnette

said that to allow a fifteen-day examination would mean practically to shut down the property for that period and would result in a positive loss to them because of the limited period of their lease. The possible loss, if the deal fell through, was too large to contemplate, and they refused.

DAY by day, as Mr. Campbell and Mr. Sullivan dilly-dallied, the output of the lease increased, and when, a fortnight later, all three of us were unanimously in favor of the proposition, Hayes and Monette flatly refused to sell. Within half a year that lease on the Mohawk produced in the neighborhood of $6,000,000 worth of ore gross, and netted the leasers about $4,500,000. The L. M. Sullivan Trust Company certainly "overlooked a bet" there.

About this time I spent an evening with Henry Peery and W. H. ("Daddy") Clark. "Daddy" Clark, like Mr. Peery, came from Salt Lake. Mr. Clark had successfully promoted the Bullfrog Gibraltar. Seated around a table in the Palm Restaurant, the conversation turned to new camps.

"Rice," said Mr. Clark, "I expect to be able to put you in on a townsite deal in a couple of weeks that will make you some money if you undertake to give the camp some publicity."

"Good," said I.

"I am having some assays run," he said, "of some samples which were brought into camp last night by a couple of prospectors, and if they turn out to be what the prospectors claim, or anything near it, we'll need your services to put a new camp on the map."

That night Mr. Peery learned from the assayer that the lowest assay of 16 samples was $86, and the highest $475, per ton. Next morning Mr. Peery informed me that he had worked all night on Mr. Clark to learn where the ore came from. Mr. Peery said Mr. Clark had told him, in the wee sma' hours, that the rich stuff came from Fairview Peak, fifty miles east of Fallon.

"Rice," said Mr. Peery, "let's beat him to it. He's going to trek it across the desert by mule team with a camp outfit to-morrow, and it will take him a week to get there."

"Billy" Taylor, who was interested with Mr. Peery in a Bullfrog enterprise, joined the party, and we each gave Mr. Peery a check for $500, forming a pool of $1,500 to send a man to Fairview to buy properties there. Mr. Peery wired the Bank of the Republic at Salt Lake to pay Ben Luce $1,500, and instructed Mr. Luce by wire to take the money, go to Fairview and do business.

It was nearly two weeks before we heard of either Mr. Clark or Mr. Luce. Mr. Clark returned to camp and said he had purchased the Nevada Hills property, scene of the big find, for $5,000, and that it was a "world-beater."

"Did you meet any outsiders there?" queried Mr. Peery.

"Yes," said Mr. Clark, "I met a man named Luce who almost got ahead of me. In fact, he did buy the property before I got there, but he had no money, and they would not take his check for $500, which was the deposit required. I had the gold with me, and that settled it."

A few days afterward, Mr. Luce came to Goldfield.

"I didn't get the big one," he said, "but I bought the Eagle's Nest, near by, for $7,000, of which $500 was demanded to be paid down, and there is ore in it and it looks good to me. I had no money with me when I arrived in Fairview. They refused my check for the Nevada Hills, but the Eagle's Nest boys took it for the first payment of $500."

Mr. Luce was not at home when Mr. Peery's despatch was delivered in Salt Lake. When it reached him the bank was closed. In order to catch the first train he was compelled to leave the money behind. He arrived in Fairview minus the $1,500, and thereby lost the Nevada Hills for Mr. Peery, Mr. Taylor and the Sullivan Trust Company.

Mr. Clark and his partners incorporated the Nevada Hills for 1,000,000 shares of the par value of $5 each and accepted subscriptions at $1 per share.

Within a few months the Nevada Hills paid $375,000 in dividends out of ore, and soon thereafter, at the height of the Goldfield boom, it was reported that the owners of the control refused an offer of $6,000,000 for the property. The mine has turned out to be a bonanza. The stock of the company sold recently on the New York Curb and San Francisco Stock Exchange at a valuation for the mine of $3,000,000, and it is believed by well-posted mining men to be worth all of that. George Wingfield, president of the Goldfield Consolidated, who followed the Sullivan Trust Company into Fairview and bought the Fairview Eagle, which is sandwiched in between the Nevada Hills and the Eagle's Nest, is now president of the Nevada Hills. Treasury stock of the Fairview Eagle was sold in Goldfield at 40 cents per share.

"JACK" CAMPBELL reported favorably on the Eagle's Nest, and we decided to organize and promote a company to own and develop the property.

The Sullivan Trust Company bought Mr. Taylor's interest in the Eagle's Nest for $8,000, Mr. Luce's for $8,000 (he had been awarded a quarter interest for his work), and Mr. Peery's for $30,000. It made the property the basis for the promotion of the Eagle's Nest Fairview Mining Company, capitalized for 1,000,000 shares of the par value of $5 each. Governor John Sparks accepted our invitation to become president of the company. The entire capitalization was sold to the public through Eastern and Western stock brokers within thirty days at a subscription price of 35 cents per share. After paying for the property, our net profits were in the neighborhood of $150,000.

The Eagle's Nest deal enabled the trust company to repay most of the money it had borrowed after the San Francisco earthquake, and this put the company on its feet again.

THE FETCHING TALE OF BULLFROG RUSH

FOLLOWING the Eagle's Nest promotion, the Sullivan Trust Company became sponsor for Bullfrog Rush. I had met Dr. J. Grant Lyman, owner of the property, on the lawn of one of the cottages of the United States Hotel in Saratoga a few years before, where he raced a string of horses and mixed with good people, and I was glad to renew his acquaintance on the desert. Dr. Lyman bought the Bullfrog Rush property for $150,000. I was present when he paid $100,000 of this money in cash at John S. Cook & Company's bank in Goldfield. The Bullfrog Rush property was of large acreage, enjoyed splendid surface showings, and was situated contiguous to the Tramps Consolidated, which was then selling around $3 a share. It looked like a fine prospect.

Dr. Lyman incorporated the company for 1,000,000 shares of the par value of $1 each. The services of the Sullivan Trust Company were employed to finance the enterprise for mine development. The Trust company obtained an option on the treasury stock of the company at 35 cents per share, and proceeded to dispose of it through Eastern brokers and direct to the public by advertising, at 45 cents per share to brokers and 50 cents per share to investors. We sold 200,000 shares, realizing $90,000 in less than thirty days, retained $20,000 for commission and expenses, and turned into the treasury of the Bullfrog Rush company $70,000, all of which was placed at the disposal of the company for mine development.

Half a dozen tunnels were run and several shafts were sunk. Down to the 400-foot level the mine appeared to be of much promise. It was then learned that the shaft at the 400-foot point had encountered a bed of lime. It appeared that all the properties on Bonanza Mountain, where the Bullfrog Rush was situated, including the Tramps Consolidated, which was then selling in the market at a valuation of $3,000,000, were bound to turn out to be rank mining failures. The entire hill, according to our engineer, was a "slide," and below the 400-foot point ore could not possibly exist.

We thereupon notified Dr. Lyman that we would discontinue the sale of the stock until such time as the property gave better indications of making a mine.

A few weeks later Dr. Lyman entered my private office unannounced. At this period Jumping Jack, Stray Dog, Indian Camp, and Eagle's Nest were all selling on the San Francisco Stock Exchange at an average of 35 per cent. above promotion prices. The L. M. Sullivan Trust Company was "making good" to investors. Bullfrog Rush had not yet been listed, and we were afraid to give it a market quotation.

"I have formed here in Goldfield the Union Securities Company," Dr. Lyman said, as he sat down close to my desk, "and I am going into the promotion business myself. I don't believe a word of the reports you have that the Bullfrog Rush is no good. I am going on with the promotion."

"You won't!" I protested. "We shall not permit it. Governor Sparks, who is the best friend the Sullivan Trust Company has, accepted the presidency of the Bullfrog Rush on our assurance that the property was a good one. John S. Cook, the leading banker of this town, accepted the treasurership on the same representations. Mr. Sullivan, president of this trust company, is vice-president of the Rush. Don't dare go on with the promotion at this time. If you do, you'll get us into trouble, and we shall take drastic action."

Dr. Lyman left the office without uttering a word.

TWO days later I received a dispatch from Governor Sparks saying that a full-page advertisement of the Union Securities Company had appeared in the *Nevada State Journal* at Reno, offering Bullfrog Rush stock for subscription. The Governor protested vigorously against the sale of the stock. We had previously informed him as to the new conditions which prevailed at the mine.

I sent Peter Grant, one of Mr. Sullivan's partners in the Palace, to Dr. Lyman to protest. The answer came back that the *Nevada State Journal* advertisement was about to be reproduced in all the newspapers of big circulation throughout the East, and that the orders for the advertisements would not be canceled. Half an hour later Dr. Lyman entered the office with Mr. Grant. Mr. Grant looked nettled. Dr. Lyman glowered.

I bade Dr. Lyman take a chair.

"If you move a finger to stop me," he said, as he sat himself down before me, "I'll expose every act of yours since you were born and show up who the boss of this trust company really is!"

Dr. Lyman was tall as a poplar and muscled like a Samson. He was fresh from the East, red-cheeked and groomed like a Chesterfield. I was cadaverous, desert-worn, office-fagged, and undersized by comparison. In a glove fight, Dr. Lyman could probably have finished me in half a round. But the disparity did not occur to me. The sense of injustice made me forget everything except Dr. Lyman's blackmailing threat. I jumped to my feet. Dr. Lyman backed up to the glass door. I aimed a blow at him. He backed away to dodge it. In a second he had collided with the big plate-glass pane, which fell with a crash. In another instant he recovered his feet, turned on his heel and ran. His face was covered with scratches, the result of his encounter with the broken plate glass. Several clerks who followed him, thinking he had committed some violent act, reported that he didn't stop running until he reached the end of the block.

CLEANING HOUSE IN BULLFROG RUSH

AFTER Dr. Lyman's hurried exit I was quick to decide upon a course of action.

The position of the trust company was this: With the exception of Bullfrog Rush, we had a string of stock-market winners to our credit with the public. If we allowed Dr. Lyman to go ahead with his promotion of Bullfrog Rush, we should, unless we abandoned our rule to protect our stocks in the market, be compelled some day to buy back all of the stock he sold. The truth about the mine was bound to come out, and we stood before the public as its sponsors.

I decided that the trust company should refund the money paid in by stockholders of Bullfrog Rush and prevent Dr. Lyman from selling more stock.

To the brokers, through whom we had sold much of the stock to the public, we telegraphed that we would refund the exact amount paid us by the brokers on delivery back to us of the certificates. We also wired to Governor Sparks and asked his permission to insert an advertisement in the newspapers over his signature, announcing that the property had proved to be a mining failure and advising the public not to buy any more shares. This pleased the Governor immensely, for he promptly wired back his O. K. with congratulations over the stand we took.

THAT night a broadside warning to the public, bearing the signature of Governor John Sparks, and a separate advertisement of the Sullivan Trust Company, offering to refund the money paid for Bullfrog Rush shares, were telegraphed to all the leading newspapers of the East. Next day both of these announcements appeared side by side with the half-page and full-page advertisements of Dr. Lyman's Union Securities Company of Goldfield offering Bullfrog Rush for public subscription.

The effect, of course, was that the public didn't buy any more Bullfrog Rush shares.

The Bullfrog Rush incident cost the Sullivan Trust Company a little less than

$90,000, which was refunded to stockholders, and about $20,000 additional that had been expended for publicity. Dr. Lyman was stripped of his entire investment in the property. The newspapers lost many thousands of dollars, representing Dr. Lyman's unpaid advertising bills. A number of mining-stock brokers also forfeited some money; they were compelled to refund their commissions.

J. C. Weir, the New York mining-stock broker, had sold in the neighborhood of 100,000 shares of Bullfrog Rush to his clients, and he took violent exception to our decision not to refund an amount in excess of the net price paid to us. He held that his firm ought not to be compelled to disgorge its profit. We stood pat and argued that he ought to be proud to share with us the glory of "making good" in such an unusual way to stockholders. It was the first time in the history of Western mining promotions that a thing like this had ever been done, and we pointed out to Mr. Weir that it would gain reputation both for himself and the trust company. For a period Mr. Weir carried on an epistolary warfare with the trust company. For nearly two months he refused to yield. Finally, we received a letter from Mr. Weir saying that since we refused to come to his terms he would accept ours, and that he had drawn on us for $4,500, with one lot of 10,000 shares of Bullfrog Rush stock attached. On receipt of the letter I gave instructions to the cashier promptly to honor the draft.

An hour later the cashier reported that the draft had been presented and that an examination of the stock certificates showed that not a single one of them had been sold by the trust company through Mr. Weir's firm, and, in fact, had never been disposed of by the trust company to anybody. A hurried examination of the stock-certificate books of the Bullfrog Rush Company, which were in the hands of the company's secretary in Goldfield, a clerk of Dr. Lyman, revealed the fact that a large number of blank certificates had been torn out of the certificate books without any entry appearing on the stubs.

The certificates returned to us by Mr. Weir bore dates of several months prior, and our immediate assumption was that Dr. Lyman, at the very moment when we were marketing the treasury stock under a binding contract which forbade him or any one else to dispose of any Bullfrog Rush stock under any circumstances, was clandestinely getting rid of these shares. Mr. Weir, it appeared, had neglected to segregate Dr. Lyman's certificates from those shipped him by the trust company. Another hypothesis was that those certificates had never been sold at all, but had merely been received from Dr. Lyman to be reforwarded to us in order to claim a refund for what we had never been paid for.

Of course, we returned the draft unpaid. But that didn't end the incident. My partner, Mr. Sullivan, took it upon himself to wire his sentiments to the man who had tried to turn the trick as follows: "You are so crooked that if you swallowed a tenpenny nail and vomited, it would come out a corkscrew." That was "Larry's" homely way of expressing his opinion.

GOLDFIELD'S year of wind and dust had brightened into the glow of Summer. The still breath of August was diffused through the thin mild air of the high altitude. This thin air, which nearly two years before had prompted a camp wit to comment on the birth of my news bureau to the effect that "the high elevation was ideal for the concoction of the visionary stuff that dreams are made of," appeared unprophetic. There was plenty of concrete evidence of the yellow metal to be seen. Production from the mines was increasing daily and money from speculators was pouring into the camp from every direction.

A mining-stock boom of gigantic proportions was brewing. Mohawk of Goldfield, which was incorporated for 1,000,000 shares of the par value of $1 each, and which in the early days went begging at 10 cents a share, was now selling around $2 a share on the San Francisco Stock Exchange, the Goldfield Stock Exchange and the New York Curb. Other Goldfields had advanced in proportion. Combination Fraction was up from 25 cents to $1.15. Silver Pick, which was promoted at 15 cents a share, was selling at 50 cents. Jumbo Extension advanced from 15 to 60. Red Top, which was offered in large blocks at 8 cents per share two years before, was selling at $1. Jumbo advanced from 25 cents to $1.25. Atlanta moved up from 12 to 40. Fifty others, representing prospects, enjoyed proportionate advances.

The Sullivan stocks were right in the swim. Jumping Jack was in hot demand on the San Francisco Stock Exchange and New York Curb at 45 cents, Stray Dog at 70 cents, Indian Camp at 80 cents, and Eagle's Nest at 50 cents. Subscribers to Indian Camp could cash in at a profit of more than 200 per cent.

The country gave indications of going "Goldfield crazy." My Goldfield publicity bureau was working overtime. James Hopper, the noted fiction writer and magazinist, ably assisted by Harry Hedrick and other competent mining reporters, was "on the job" and doing yeoman service. The news-columns of the daily papers of the country teemed with stories of the Goldfield excitement.

People began to flock into the camp in droves. The town was a scene of bustle and life. Motley groups assembled at every corner and discussed the great production being made from the Mohawk and the terrific market advances being chronicled by mining stocks representing all sorts and descriptions of Goldfield properties. Whenever Hayes and Monnette, owners of the Mohawk lease, appeared on the streets, they were followed by a mixed throng of the riffraff of the camp, who hailed them, open-mouthed, as wonders.

The madness of speculation in mining shares in the camp itself was beginning to exceed in its intensity the exciting play at the gaming tables. There was a contagion of excitement even in the open spaces of the street.

At each meeting of the Goldfield Stock Exchange the boardroom was crowded. The sessions were tempestuous. Every step and every hallway leading to the room was jammed with men and women over whose faces all lights and shades of expression flitted. The bidding for mining issues was frantic. Profits mounted high. Everybody seemed to be buying and no one appeared to be willing to sell except at a big advance over the last quotations. Castle-building and fumes of fancy usurped reason.

Bank deposits were increasing by leaps and bounds. The camp was rapidly becoming drunk with the joy of fortune-making.

Manhattan now shone mostly in the reflected glory of Goldfield, but Manhattan stocks were booming. This enabled the Sullivan Trust Company to dispose of nearly all of its Manhattan securities which had been carried over after the San Francisco catastrophe and to pile up a great reserve of cash.

A big demand was developing for shares in Fairview companies. Nevada Hills of Fairview was selling on the stock exchanges and curbs at $3 per share, or a valuation of $3,000,000 for the mine. Only a few months before it had fallen into Goldfield and Salt Lake hands for $5,000. Fairview Eagle's Nest, for which subscriptions had been accepted at 35 cents per share by the Sullivan Trust Company, was selling at 70 cents on the San Francisco Stock Exchange.

The Sullivan Trust Company announced the offering of 1,000,000 shares, embracing the entire capitalization of the Fairview Hailstone Mining Company, at 25 cents. The stock was purchased by us at 8 cents. We sold out in a week. San Francisco and Salt Lake were the principal buyers, and it was unnecessary even to insert an advertisement offering the stock. The brokers fell over one another to underwrite the offering by telegraph.

PRIZE FIGHTS AND MINING PROMOTION

FOR a fortnight there was a lull in news of sensational gold discoveries, but the approaching Gans-Nelson fight, which was arranged to be held in Goldfield on Labor Day, September 3, furnished sufficient exciting reading matter for the newspapers throughout the land to keep the Goldfield news pot boiling. The Sullivan Trust Company had guaranteed the promoters of the fight against loss to the extent of $10,000, and other camp interests put up $50,000 more. Gans, the fighter, was without funds to put up his forfeit and make the match, and the Sullivan Trust Company had also advanced the money for that purpose. Mr. Sullivan became Gans' manager. When Gans arrived in town Mr. Sullivan interviewed him to this effect:

"Gans, if you lose this fight they'll kill you here in Goldfield; they'll think you laid down. I and my friends are going to bet a ton of money on you, and you must win."

Gans promised he would do his best.

"Tex" Rickard and his friends wagered on Nelson. The cashier of the Sullivan

Trust Company was instructed to cover all the money that any one wanted to bet at odds of 10 to 8 and 10 to 7 on Gans, we taking the Gans end. A sign was hung in the window reading: "A large sum of money has been placed with us to wager on Gans. Nelson money promptly covered inside." Mr. Sullivan was in his glory. Prize-fighting suited his tastes better than high finance, and he was as busy as a one-armed paper-hanger with the itch.

An argument arose about who should referee the fight. "Tex" Rickard nominated George Siler, of Chicago, and Battling Nelson promptly O. K'd the selection. Mr. Sullivan objected. He sent for the newspaper men and gave out an interview in which he declared that Mr. Siler was prejudiced against Gans because he was a negro, and he did not believe Mr. Siler would give Gans a fair shake.

"Rice," whispered Sullivan after the newspaper men left the office, "I am four-flushing about that race-prejudice yarn, but it won't do any harm. Siler needs the job. He's broke and I'll make him eat out of my hand before I'll agree to let him referee the fight. They've already invited Siler to come here, and I won't be able to get another referee, but I'll beat them at their own game. When Siler gets here I'll thrash matters out with him and agree to his selection, but first I want him to know who's boss."

Mr. Siler arrived. An hour later he was closeted with Mr. Sullivan in one of the back rooms of the trust company offices. The dialogue which ensued was substantially as follows:

Mr. Siler. You've got me dead wrong, Sullivan. I want to referee this fight, and I want you to withdraw your objections.

Mr. Sullivan. Well, I've heard from sources which I can't tell you anything about that you don't like Gans, and I can't stand for you.

Mr. Siler. I need this fight, and I've come all the way from Chicago in the expectation of refereeing it. I couldn't give Gans the worst of it if I wanted to. He is a clean fighter and I would not have an excuse.

Mr. Sullivan. Gans is a clean fighter, but Nelson isn't; he uses dirty tactics and he is a fouler for fair.

Mr. Siler. If he does any fouling in this fight I'll make him quit or declare him out.

Mr. Sullivan. What guarantee have I got that you won't give Gans the worst of it?

Mr. Siler. Well, I'll tell you, Sullivan, if you withdraw your objections I'll guarantee you that I'll be this fair. If Nelson uses foul tactics, or if he don't, I'll show my fairness to Gans by giving him the benefit of every doubt. Now, will that satisfy you?

Mr. Sullivan. Yes, it'll satisfy me, but, remember, if you don't keep your word you'll have just as much chance of getting out of this town alive as Gans will have if he lays down! You understand?

Mr. Siler. Yes.

* * *

ON THE afternoon of the fight the Sullivan Trust Company cast accounts and found that it had wagered $45,000 on Gans against a total of $32,500 put up on Nelson.

Mr. Sullivan, after talking it over with me, had accepted the honorary position of announcer at the ringside. Though not of aristocratic mien, "Larry" was of fine physique, with a bold, bluff countenance, and I felt confident that his cordial manner would appeal to the assemblage.

Just before the prize-fighters entered the ring, "Larry" jumped into the arena. Standing above the mass of moving heads and holding up both hands, he hailed the great crowd thus:

"Gentlemen, we are assembled in this grand *areno* to witness a square fight. This fight is held under the auspices of 'Tex' Rickard, a man of great *acclumuations*——"

"Larry" did not get much farther. The audience laughed, and then jeered and hooted until it became hoarse. His words were drowned in the tempest of derision. I was informed by friends who were close to the ringside that he went on in the same rambling way for a few minutes more, but I can't testify to that fact from my own knowledge because "acclumuations" and "areno" overcame me and I stopped up my ears.

The fight progressed for twenty rounds or more, when I began to doubt the ability of Gans to win. Mr. Sullivan had a commissioner at the ringside, who, up to this time, had been betting anybody and everybody all the 10 to 6 that was wanted against Nelson. I hailed Mr. Sullivan at the ringside.

"This doesn't look like the cinch for Gans you said it would be," I whispered.

"Wait a minute," Mr. Sullivan replied, "I'll go to Gans' corner as soon as this round is over and find out what's doing with him."

Mr. Sullivan went over to Gans' corner and came back.

"Gans says he can't win this fight, but he won't lose. He's a good ring-general and he'll pull us out. Don't bet any more money. I'm going to stay close to the ring-side. Watch close."

It was apparent during the next ten rounds that Gans was availing himself of every opportunity to impress upon the audience that Nelson was inclined to use dirty fighting tactics, and soon Nelson was being hooted for foul fighting. Gans, on the other hand, appeared to be fighting fair and like a gentleman. Soon it was evident that Gans had won the sympathy and favor of the audience.

The fight had continued through the fortieth round, when Mr. Sullivan again repaired to Gans' corner and held another animated whispered conversation with him.

In the forty-second round Gans of a sudden went down, rolled over and, holding his hand under his belt, let out a yell of anguish that indicated to the excited multitude that Nelson had fouled him frightfully.

In another instant Mr. Sullivan had clambered into the ring. Confusion reigned. The audience was on its feet. Pushing his fist into the referee's face, Mr. Sullivan cried: "Now, Siler, you saw that foul, didn't you? It's a foul, isn't it? Gans wins, doesn't he?"

All of this happened quick as a flash. Mr. Siler, pale as a ghost, whispered something inaudibly.

Mr. Sullivan, turning to the assemblage and raising both arms to the skies, yelled:

"Gentlemen, the referee declares Gans the winner on a foul!"

The audience acclaimed his decision with salvos of applause. There did not appear to be a man in the crowd who doubted a foul had been committed, although Nelson at once protested his innocence.

Next day Mr. Sullivan told me that in or near the twenty-fourth round Gans had broken his wrist and knew he could not win the fight by a knockout. He also said that Gans went down in the forty-second round in order to save the day.

"*I* won that fight," said Mr. Sullivan. "I told Gans while he was in his corner after the fortieth round that if he lost he would be laying down on his friends, that he had the audience with him, and that it was time to take advantage of Nelson's foul tactics."

This was my first experience in prize-fighting, and my last. My sympathies were, however, with the winner. Gans' tactics throughout up to the last round were gentlemanly and those of Nelson unfair. Even the partisans of Nelson who had wagered on him agreed after the fight that the battle put up by the negro up to the forty-second round was a white man's fight and he was entitled to win.

Nelson had been guilty of foul tactics in almost every round, but the probabilities are that Gans was not disabled by a foul blow in the forty-second round and that he took advantage of the sentiment in his favor, which had been created by his manly battle up to that time, to go down at a psychological moment.

I saw Mr. Siler after the contest, and he appeared pleased that his decision was so well received, but he assured me that if he was invited to referee another bout in any mining camp he would decline the job.

THE Sullivan Trust Company, of course, won a big bet on the result, but it lost a bigger one as an outcome of the battle on the very next day. The impression created by Announcer Sullivan's attempt to reach lofty flights of eloquence in his speech to the fight-audience was bad for the trust company, and it required the use of over $100,000 on the day following to meet the flood of selling orders in Sullivan stocks which poured into the San Francisco Stock Exchange.

THE YEAR OF BIG FIGURES

I SOON recouped these stock-market losses. At about four o'clock one afternoon, a few days afterward, a miner who had been at work during the day on the Loftus-Sweeney lease of the Combination Fraction, called at the office of the trust company and asked me to buy 1,000 shares of Combination Fraction stock for him. He divulged to me that just as he was coming off shift he had learned that a prodigious strike of high-grade ore had been made at depth. Combination Fraction had closed that afternoon on the San Francisco Stock Exchange with sales at $1.15. I went out on the street and proceeded to buy all the Combination Fraction in sight. In half an hour I had corralled about 60,000 shares at an average of $1.30. An hour later the owners of the lease obtained the information on which I was working, and by eight o'clock that night, when the Goldfield Stock Exchange began its evening session, the price had jumped to $1.85. Within a week thereafter the price skyrocketed to $3.75, and at this figure I took profits of nearly $150,000. Had I held on a little longer I could have doubled that profit, for Combination Fraction a few weeks later sold at higher than $6.

The Combination Fraction strike was followed by a number of others, and the boom gathered force. By October, Goldfield Silver Pick had advanced to $1 per share, up 600 per cent. Goldfield Red Top was selling at $2, Jumbo at $2, and Mohawk at $5, showing profits of from 2,000 to 5,000 per cent. Others had gained proportionately. In fact, there were over twenty Goldfield securities listed on the exchange that showed the public a stock-market profit of anywhere from 100 per cent. to 5,000 per cent.

Mining machinery of every description was being shipped into camp, and for half a mile around the Combination mine the landscape of assembled gallows-frames resembled a great producing oil field. There were signs of mining activity everywhere. For four miles east of the Combination mine and six miles south every inch of ground had been located. Claims situated miles away from the productive area were changing hands hourly at high figures.

The Sullivan stocks kept pace in the markets with the other booming securities, and it was plain that the trust company was riding on a tidal wave of success. Our profits exceeded $1,500,000 at this period, and we were just eight months old.

In quick succession the Sullivan Trust Company promoted the Lou Dillon Goldfield Mining Company at 25 cents per share, a valuation of $250,000 for the property, which cost $50,000; and the Silver Pick Extension, which cost $25,000, at the same figure, netting several hundred thousand dollars' profit on these two transactions. Options to purchase the Lou Dillon and Silver Pick Extension, which were situated within 500 feet of the Combination mine, had been in possession of the Sullivan Trust Company for months, and had increased in value to such an extent that on the day the subscriptions were opened in Goldfield for Lou Dillon at 25 cents per share, a prospector named Phoenix, who had received $50,000 from the Sullivan Trust Company for the entire property, subscribed for 100,000 shares, or a tenth interest in the enterprise, paying $25,000 therefor.

It was the rule of the Sullivan Trust Company to open subscriptions in Goldfield on the day its advertising copy left the camp by mail for the East. Newspaper publishers were always instructed to publish the advertisements, which were generally of the full-page variety, on the day following receipt. In the case of Lou Dillon it became necessary to telegraph all newspapers east of Chicago not to publish the advertisement because of oversubscription before the copy reached them, and in the case of Silver Pick Extension the orders to publish the advertisements were canceled by telegraph before the mail carrying the copy reached Kansas City. San Francisco, Los Angeles and Salt Lake subscribed for 50 per cent. of the entire offering of Lou Dillon and Silver Pick Extension, and Goldfield for 25 per cent. As a matter of fact, had we desired, we could have sold the entire offerings in Goldfield, Tonopah and Reno without inserting any advertisements, so great was the excitement in the State itself.

At this period the combined monthly payrolls of the mining companies promoted by the Sullivan Trust Company totaled in excess of $50,000, and the properties were reaching a forward state of development.

IT WAS early Autumn in Goldfield, warm, dry and dusty, and never a cloud in the sky. I was at my desk eighteen hours a day, and liked my job. Things were coming our way.

The Sullivan Trust Company was in politics. Mr. Sullivan was popular with the miners, and Governor Sparks was a large asset of the trust company because he had been allowing the use of his name as president of the mining companies promoted by it. Nevertheless, when the State election approached, the Governor had no money for campaign expenses. He telegraphed the trust company from Carson:

"I will not stand for renomination."

We replied: "You are certain to be

elected, and you will be renominated by acclamation if you accept."

"I won't run unless you guarantee my election," he telegraphed.

We answered: "We guarantee."

The Governor was renominated by the Democrats. The Republicans placed in nomination J. F. Mitchell, a mining engineer and mine owner, who was very popular among mining men.

There were thousands of miners domiciled in Goldfield. The Western Federation of Miners dominated.

"Sullivan," I said, "isn't it a cinch these miners will vote the Democratic ticket because Mitchell has been put forward by the mine owners? Is it necessary to spend any money with the Western Federation?"

"Not a dollar!" replied Mr. Sullivan. "There's a meeting of the executive committee to-morrow. I'm going to be around when they meet. Without spending a dollar I'll bring home the bacon. Watch me!"

Sullivan reported to me the next day that he had succeeded in his mission.

"I didn't attend the meeting," he said, "but I did see the main 'squeeze.' He told me that a contribution to the Miner's Hospital would be gratefully accepted, but that even that was not necessary, and that Sparks would win in a walk."

The only campaign money advanced by the Sullivan Trust Company was given to Mr. Sullivan to go to Reno. He asked for $1,000, and he used it in conducting open house on the first floor of the Golden Hotel, meeting people and greeting them. Reno appeared to be a Republican stronghold, and Mr. Sullivan, by baiting the Catholics against the Protestants, succeeded in holding down the Republican majority to an extent that was wofully insufficient to overcome the Democratic majority rolled up in Goldfield with the aid of the miners. Governor Sparks was reelected by a handsome majority. Had the occasion demanded it, we would have "tapped a barrel." But it was not necessary.

THE STORY OF GOLDFIELD CONSOLIDATED

RUMORS were rife in Goldfield of a merger of mammoth proportions which was said to be on the tapis. Great as were the gold discoveries in camp, they did not justify the terrific advances being chronicled in the stock-market, and it was apparent that something extraordinary must be hatching to justify the market's action.

George Wingfield, who had enjoyed a meteoric career, rising within five years from a faro dealer in Tonopah to the ownership of control in the Mohawk and many other mining companies and to part ownership of the leading Goldfield bank, John S. Cook & Company, which was then credited with having $7,000,000 on deposit, was said to be engineering the deal. The names of the properties were not given, nor the figures. It occurred to me that in any merger that was made the Jumbo and Red Top, because of their central location, must be included. I sought out Charles D. Taylor, who with his brother, H. L. Taylor, and Capt. J. B. Menardi, owned the control of these properties. He asked $2.50 per share for his stock and that of his partners—all or none. Mr. Taylor had walked into the camp as a prospector. Most of his nights were spent at the gaming tables, and he was reported to be an easy mark for professional gamblers. I put Mr. Sullivan on his trail. Mr. Sullivan reported to me that Mr. Wingfield was hobnobbing with Mr. Taylor.

"Get an option on these properties from Taylor," I told Mr. Sullivan.

NEXT morning I met Mr. Sullivan. He held in his hands 20,000 shares of Jumbo, selling at $1.75 per share on the Goldfield Stock Exchange.

"I won it in a poker game last night with Taylor and Wingfield," he said. "I have an oral option on the property good for three days at $2.50, but if you leave it to me, I'll win these properties from him playing cards."

I did not see Mr. Sullivan again for a week. Next I heard of him he had "fallen off the water-wagon" and was reported to be celebrating the event in Tonopah. While Mr. Sullivan was "kidding" himself about his poker-playing ability, Mr. Wingfield had come to terms with Mr. Taylor and had bought the control of Jumbo and Red Top at an average price of $2.10 per share. That explained Mr. Sullivan's lapse. However, I blamed myself. Mr. Sullivan was no match for Mr. Wingfield. In any game from stud-poker to fighting a pistol-duel Mr. Wingfield can outwit, outmaneuver and outgeneral a hundred like "Larry."

Both companies had been capitalized

for 1,000,000 shares. The sale required that a fortune be paid over. Mr. Wingfield paid a small sum down, and Mr. Taylor placed the stock of both of these companies in escrow in the John S. Cook & Company bank, the balance to be paid a month later.

The purchase of control of the Jumbo and Red Top by the firm of Wingfield and Nixon signalized the beginning of a stock-market campaign for higher prices that stands unprecedented for intensity in the history of mining-stock speculation in this country since the great boom of the Comstock lode in 1871–1872.

The market for all listed Goldfield stocks was made to boil and sizzle day in and day out until Jumbo and Red Top had been ballooned from $2 to $5 per share, Laguna from 40 cents to $2, Goldfield Mining from 50 cents to $2, and Mohawk from $5 to $20. Within three weeks the advance in market price of the issued capitalization of this quintet alone represented the difference between $8,000,000 and $26,500,000.

A few days before top prices were reached, it was officially announced that the merger of Mohawk, Red Top, Jumbo, Goldfield Mining and Laguna into the Goldfield Consolidated Mines Company had been made on the basis of $20 for each outstanding share of Mohawk, $5 for Red Top, $5 for Jumbo, $2 for Goldfield Mining, and $2 for Laguna. It was also given out that the promoters, Wingfield and Nixon, had alloted themselves $2,500,000 in stock of the merged companies as a promoters' fee. Right on top of this came an announcement that the Combination mine had been turned into the merger for $4,000,000 in cash and stock, and it was learned that go-betweens had made a profit of $1,000,000 on the deal by securing an option on the property for $3,000,000.

In short, a merger was put through of properties and stocks, the issued capitalization of which was selling in the markets on the day the merger was conceived for $11,000,000, at a valuation of $33,000,000, and in addition the promoters received $2,500,000 for their "services." Had the properties been merged on the basis of their selling prices three weeks prior, the equivalent value of the 3,500,000 shares of merger stock would have been a fraction above $3. As it stood, under the ballooning process, the market value was $10, which was the par.

At the time of the merger these were the conditions that ruled at the mines:

The Mohawk, appraised at $20,000,000, had produced under lease in the neighborhood of $8,000,000, of which less than $2,000,000 had found its way into the treasury of the Mohawk Mining Company, the balance going to the leasers. The leasers had "high-graded" the property to a fare-you-well, and less than $1,000,000 worth of high-grade remained in sight, although it was conceded on every side that the leasers had not attempted, nor were they able during the period of their leasehold, to block out systematically and put into sight all of the ore in the mine. Large, but indefinite, prospective value therefore attached to Mohawk in addition to the tonnage in sight.

The Laguna, for which $2,000,000 had been paid in stock, did not have a pound of ore in sight, and there were no indications that it would ever have any.

Goldfield Mining, scene of a sensational production during the early days of the camp, appraised at $2,000,000 more, had fizzled out as a producer.

Jumbo, taken in for $5,000,000, for a year previous had produced little or no ore, most of the time being exhausted by the management in sinking a deep shaft, and it had less than $500,000 in sight.

Red Top, valued at another $5,000,000, had in excess of $2,000,000 worth of medium grade ore blocked out.

Wingfield and Nixon were also heavily interested in Columbia Mountain, Sandstorm, Blue Bull, Crackerjack, Red Hills, Oro, Booth, Milltown, Kendall, May Queen, and other Goldfield stocks. No sooner did the five stocks forming the merger begin to show such startling market advances than the ballooning tendency manifested itself in Wingfield and Nixon's miscellaneous list, and all of them showed phenomenal gains. Soon the entire list of Goldfield, Tonopah, Manhattan, Bullfrog, and other Nevada mining securities listed on the San Francisco Stock Exchange and traded in on the exchanges and curbs of the country, felt the force of the terrific rises, and sympathetically they skyrocketed to unheard-of levels.

To convey an idea as to how far the prices of these stocks were moved up beyond their intrinsic worth, as a result of the ballooning process of the merger, I give some comparisons.

Columbia Mountain sold during the boom at above $1.50; it is now selling at 5 cents. Blue Bull, Crackerjack, Oro, Booth, Red Hills, Milltown, Kendall, Conqueror, Hibernia, Ethel, Kewanas, Sandstorm and May Queen sold at an average of 75 cents during the boom; they are now selling at an average of less than 5 cents. A hundred other Goldfield securities, which were in eager demand at the zenith of the spectacular movement at prices ranging from 50 cents to $2.50 can now be purchased at from 1 to 5 cents per share, while many others that were hopefully bought by an overwrought public at all sorts of figures are now not quoted at all.

AT THE HEIGHT OF THE FRENZY

THE difference between the market price of listed Nevada stocks on November 15, 1906, and that of to-day is in excess of $200,000,000. A fair estimate of the public's real-money loss in the listed division is $150,000,000.

Nor was this all of the damage that was done. When excitement in Goldfield's listed stocks reached a frenzy, wild-catters operating from the cities got into harness, and within three months in the neighborhood of 2,000 companies, owning in most instances properties situated miles from the proved zone in Goldfield, or in unproved camps near Goldfield, were foisted on the public for $150,000,000 more.

The fact that Mohawk, which in the early days of Goldfield could have been purchased at 10 cents, had advanced to $20 and had shown purchasers a profit of 20,000 per cent.; that Laguna had advanced in less than two years from 15 cents to $2; that Jumbo and Red Top, selling at $5, could have been purchased a year or two before at around 10 cents; that Goldfield Mining, which had in the early days been peddled around the camp at 15 cents, had moved up to $2, etc., gave the wild-catters an argument that was convincing to gulls in every town and hamlet in the Union. And the harvest was immense. Not one of the 2,000 wild-cats has made good, and every dollar invested has been lost.

It will be noted from the reckoning as given that about as much money was lost in the listed stocks of the camps as in the unlisted "cats and dogs."

As a matter of fact, veteran mining-stock buyers, in camp and out of the camp, lost as much hard cash as did the unsophisticated. San Francisco, which owes its opulence of years gone by to successful mining endeavor, was probably hit as hard as any other city in the Union. San Francisco thought it knew the game, and it confined its operations to the stocks listed on the exchange where the Comstocks are traded in. But San Francisco did not know the inside of the merger deal as it is now known to every schoolboy in Nevada.

The operation on the inside was this. Wingfield and Nixon owned the John S. Cook & Company bank in Goldfield, and they owned the control of a number of mining companies which were of little or no account as well as having acquired the control of the biggest mine in camp. During the height of the boom, which they engineered to swing the merger, they disposed of millions of shares of an indiscriminate lot of companies, and used the proceeds to take over Jumbo and Red Top and to take up their outstanding contracts in Mohawk and other integrals of the merger. They likewise were able during the ballooning process to dispose of much Mohawk at from $15 to $20, much Jumbo at from $4 to $5, much Red Top at from $4 to $5, that cost them very considerably less than this, and in this way were enabled to finance their deal to a finish.

I have just pointed out that in order to accomplish the merger it was necessary that the market in all Goldfield securities, in which the promoters were interested, be stimulated in order to enable unloading by the insiders before some of the very large payments became due. This being accomplished, and the payments having been made, the promoters sought to establish a market for merger shares at or around par. In order to accomplish this the Goldfield bank, in which the promoters were heavily interested, stimulated speculation and managed to spread a feeling of security by announcing its willingness to loan from 60 to 80 per cent. of par on merger shares.

All Goldfield fell for this, and the camp went broke as a result.

Within eighteen months thereafter Goldfield Consolidated sold down to $3.50 in the markets, and margin-traders and borrowers who had put up the stock as collateral to purchase more were butchered. The stock has since paid $3.50 in dividends. Its recent "low" in the market was $5.50 per share, and its "high" $7 a share.

It must be evident that Wingfield and Nixon, both of whom are multimillionaires as the result of their mining-stock operations in Goldfield, were directly and indirectly important factors in the loss by the public of $300,000,000, as set forth above. It is admitted that less than $7,000,000 worth of ore had been developed as a reserve at the time $35,000,000 worth of stock in the merger was issued and a market manufactured to hold the stock at this fictitious price-level. It is not of particular interest that Goldfield Consolidated, by reason of sensationally rich mine developments at depth, has since given promise of returning to stockholders an amount almost equal to par for their shares, and that it now appears that those who were able to weather the intervening declines may in the end be out only the interest on their money.

This is also evident: Goldfield Consolidated stockholders had two chances at the outset. They could break even or lose—break even on their investment if the mine made good in a sensational way, which was a big gamble at the time, or lose if the mine didn't. They could not win.

Mr. Nixon is a United States Senator from Nevada. He is also president of the Nixon National Bank of Reno, Nevada. He held both of these positions at the time the merger was made, and it was largely because of Mr. Nixon's political and financial position that the daring market operations of the mergerers which led up to the merger proved so successful.

In the *Nevada Mining News* of May 25, 1907, circulation 28,000, an interview appeared with United States Senator Nixon of Nevada, vouched for as follows:

> The manuscript of the interview was submitted to, and approved by, the Senator. Unchanged by one jot or tittle, it is printed just as it came from his hands. Even now the Senator holds a carbon of the original manuscript and may brand us with it if we have broken the faith we pledged.

I quote from the Senator's interview, as it appeared in that issue of the *Nevada Mining News:*

> "What do you estimate the ultimate earnings of Goldfield Consolidated will be?" was asked.
>
> "Consolidated will be a bigger producer, I should say, three or four years from now than it will be one year from now," Senator Nixon replied, "and I believe I am conservative when I say that the property will be eventually earning $1,000,000 net monthly."

"Then, as an investment, the stock is easily a $20 stock?"

"That is a minimum estimate of its future value, I should say," was the response.

As to that interview:

Mr. Nixon said that within three or four years (the time limit is up), $20 would be a minimum price for the shares. They touched $10 only once since then, or one-half of his estimate. Shortly after the interview was given they sold down as low as $3.50.

He said, further, that the mines would ultimately earn at the rate of $1,000,000 a month. This statement also has fallen far short of fulfilment.

Since George S. Nixon, as president of the Goldfield Consolidated Company, gave this interview, according to his own statement, he has disposed of all of his holdings, and at an average price, it is believed, of less than $8 a share.

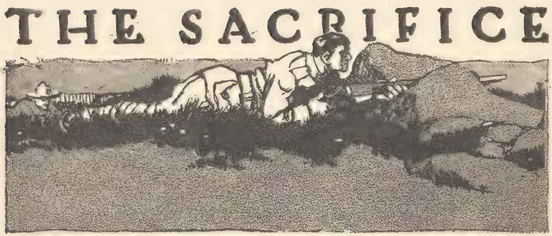
This is only a superficial rendering of the big event in Goldfield's history, but it is sufficient to furnish an example of the effect of Get-Rich-Quick influences that radiate from high places and separate the public from millions upon millions, without being called to account.

The dear American public has been falling for this kind of insidious brand of Get-Rich-Quick dope for years. It is being gulled into losing millions through its fetish worship of promoters with millions, who are really the Get-Rich-Quicks of the day that are dangerous.

Greenwater, a rich man's camp, in which the public sank from $20,000,000 to $30,000,000 during three months that marked the zenith of the Goldfield boom, is another case in point where a confiding investing public followed a deceiving light and was led to ruthless slaughter.

(The public's loss of $30,000,000 in Greenwater mining stocks, the terrific crash that followed in Goldfield stocks, the loss by the Sullivan Trust Company of $3,000,000 in three weeks, and the great Rawhide, Nevada, stampede, in which 30,000 people crossed the desert, of whom 12,000 remained and made the camp their abode for months, will be told by Mr. Rice in the July number.)

THE SACRIFICE



by DONAL HAMILTON HAINES

THERE was one flat cap above a jutting rock three hundred yards away at which Jenks had been shooting fruitlessly for half an hour. Thirty-two times he had fired, he discovered by an examination of the empty loops in his cartridge-belt, and six times he had been rewarded by seeing the flat cap disappear. But always it reappeared in the same place, and always a bullet *zummed* through the air above Jenks' head or *whanged* into the ground to one side or the other of him.

He felt a deepening animosity against the wearer of that flat cap. This unknown might have the grace to get in the way of one of Jenks' bullets, or send one of his own into Jenks' vitals! That at least would put an abrupt end to this endless lining of sights and pulling of trigger. At the present rate it could result only in Jenks' running out of cartridges and being forced to crawl back uncomfortably to where there might be more. Three months' enlightening experience had convinced Jenks that extra ammunition was always hard to find when it was most to be desired. He did not go out of his way to lay this up against the gigantic system of which he formed a part, but accepted it as another galling fact in a chain of unpleasant realities which went to make up an unsatisfactory universe.

"Why don't you stick your hat up on the end of your bayonet and see if you can't make that chap break cover?" suggested a mild voice in Jenks' ear.

The private looked around to see a man in drab clothes, a slouch hat and spiral puttees lying prone on the earth behind him. He recognized him as one of the war-correspondents whom the army was kept busy chasing away from the front, where they could really see things and so write authentic reports of what was going on.

"Well, in the first place," Jenks answered argumentatively, "I don't want that hat shot full of holes. It's a good hat, and now and then it rains in this country!"

After saying which he sniffed in high disdain and proceeded to follow the other's advice, employing a chance stick instead of his bayonet for the purpose. The stratagem succeeded. The first indications of success were so violent that the war-correspondent curled up his long legs and hugged the ground closer. For the owner of the flat cap rattled a magazine full of shots through the air around Jenks' hat, then, failing to hit it, he rose to his full height for a better shot, sent the hat skimming through the air, and got one of the .30 caliber, nickel-jacketed bullets from Jenks' rifle squarely in the pit of the stomach. Jenks and the journalist witnessed the fall of the man in the flat cap with quiet enthusiasm.

"Through the middle, I 'low!" announced Jenks.

"Very pretty!" complimented the drab-clad man, and they relapsed into silence.

THERE might have been other flat caps sticking above the gray rocks for Jenks to shoot at, but he was in no mood to hunt for them. He laid the rifle to one side, wet his finger and laid it on the barrel, which sizzled sharply. Jenks swore, waved his blistered finger and opened the breech to let the air through the barrel more freely.

"Thirty rounds and you could boil coffee on 'em!" he complained to the drab man.

The latter nodded agreeably and offered Jenks a cigarette from a leather case. Jenks took it in his big, brown, blunt-nailed fingers and looked at it critically.

"Tryin' to get a real smoke out of a cigarette," he averred, "is like tryin' to plow a forty-acre field with a penknife!"

The newspaper man laughed and scratched a match on the sole of his boot.

"You come off a farm?" he asked casually.

Jenks stared at the end of his glowing cigarette and nodded soberly several times.

"And God knows why!" he added seriously.

"Maybe you came because of the same reason that drove me," suggested the journalist. "I wanted to see what this business was like."

The wagging of Jenks' head was a decided negative.

"Nope," he said, "I ain't got no such sized curiosity. I got cured o' that when I was a kid. I wanted to see just how hard a cow *could* kick! I found out all right, and I can't say I was any better off for knowin.' Nope, I didn't care none what war was like. I didn't think it was goin' to be fun. I just sort of thought I ought to go. Dunno why, 'zactly. Old Man White come round and talked to a lot of us fellers down at the corners 'bout our duty. 'You oughter go,' he says. 'It's your country callin' ye, the place that give birth to ye, the land of yer fathers! It's yer duty!'"

Jenks paused to snap the butt of his cigarette at the stalk of a milkweed.

"Now me an' the U-nited States ain't never got very close together," he continued. "I allus felt that if either me or the country died overnight we wouldn't notice it none if nobody told us. But Old Man White kind o' set me to thinkin'. I never took no interest in politics; never went out to vote—didn't even enroll. All the U-nited States meant to me was an eagle on the few dollars that come my way. Old Man White used to tell me I ought to be ashamed of myself. Said I wa'n't no citizen. Maybe he was right. I was keepin' my woman an' the kids fed an' runnin' my farm, but that's 'bout as far as my bein' a citizen *did* go, I guess."

Jenks was interrupted again by the clatter of a short-lived fusillade along another portion of the thin skirmish-line, hidden by a twist of the ridge. He raised his eyes from the ground to watch the distant passage of an officer's patrol of cavalrymen in wide, flapping hats. The correspondent held out the leather case again, and Jenks selected another cigarette less critically.

"They're so durned small," he said, as though to apologize for smoking another, "that a feller has to smoke another to remember what the last one tasted like! Yes, I guess Old Man White drove me off here. I got to thinkin' 'bout things a whole lot, and I just made up my mind that maybe the debt was on my side. I hadn't done very much for the country, and I judged from what I see in the papers that about a hundred thousand chaps about my size an' age would come in pretty handy, so I sent Millie an' the kids to her folks an' just come along."

He stopped abruptly, as though having reached a natural conclusion, and sat staring out at the hot ridge opposite, its tumbling, rugged rocks climbing high above the level on which he sat. His companion looked at him narrowly and shifted his position on the warm earth.

"Glad you came?" the correspondent asked lazily, chewing his words as he shifted the cigarette to the other corner of his mouth with his tongue so that he might not have to move his hands.

"No," answered Jenks with surprising alacrity, "I ain't! I hadn't ought to have done it. Three months, now, I've grubbed around this landscape, shootin' at people I ain't got nothin' against, and gettin' shot at by them. Now there's that chap a few minutes back. I was layin' for him same's I've laid for woodchucks. I was plain *mad* at him for no reason 't all 'cept I couldn't hit him—an' now he's doubled up, and maybe he's got a wife an' kids like mine. But that ain't the point! I ain't sayin' nothin' against this here war. Maybe it's all right; I dunno nothin' about it. But *I* ain't no business here; I ought 'a' stayed to home! Three months gone, an' my farm's goin' to rack. When I get back I'll hev t' borrow money to get things squared up, an' it'll take me the Lord's own while to pay it up.

"An' I ain't no real *use* here! I ain't doin' half as much good potterin' round with this no-'count gun as I would be gettin' in my wheat. I ain't no for-sure soldier; it ain't in me. I haven't shirked none, but I don't like it. An' them same U-nited States wouldn't miss me none if I lit out right now. No, sir! if I could sneak past that cussed little lieutenant I could go home an' never be missed. But he'd see me, sure!"

"You'd desert, then, if you could?" asked the man in drab.

Jenks flared with sudden anger. "Not by a —— sight!" he snorted. "I ain't that sort. I come out for the war, an' I'm goin' to stay!"

His companion nodded with a show of understanding. There was a bundle of notes in his inside pocket which ought to reach the wire, but they could wait a few minutes.

"Well, suppose," he persisted, "you had the choice between doing some big thing to-morrow—getting to the top of that ridge, we'll say, or going home, which would you do?"

"Home with an honorable discharge?" queried Jenks.

"Yes."

Jenks rubbed a stubbly chin an instant, puckering his lips about the frayed end of the cigarette.

"I'd go home!" he announced finally. "Yeah, that's what I'd do all right; I'd go home. I know what you're thinkin', mister, but just look a-here. I leave my farm an' people an' come out here to go soldierin'. Maybe I go through all right, then I go back home, an' what happens? Do I get banquets an' statues an' such like? Un huh! Not me! There's too many of us. I wear my army pants, to plow in, and folks say: 'There's Bill Jenks usin' up his army clo'es. He was in the war.' That's all!

"An' maybe I get shot; maybe it's for keeps, an' then Millie an' the kids is in for it. Her folks ain't got nothin'; she'd have to work the rest of her days. Maybe I lose an arm or a leg, an' then what am I good for? Nothin', just nothin' but settin' around in the sun an' lettin' her work for me! Them's the chances I have to take, an' there ain't nothin' to set over ag'in 'em! They don't need me here half's much as that gal an' the kids does. There's a lot of chaps here could do Bill Jenks' soldierin' for him, but they couldn't go back an' run his farm. I ain't needed!"

He threw the butt of the second cigarette at the same milkweed.

"Old Man White," he concluded, "give me a rum go. I ain't done my duty!"

The newspaper man rolled over and started to crawl away to file his sketchy despatches. He tossed Jenks a third cigarette as he prepared to go.

"Don't try to figure it out," he advised. "That question is only about as old as the institution of war—which is pretty average hoary. Smoke another stick on it. So long."

"S'long!" answered Jenks, and watched him crawl off through the grass.

IT WAS not on the cards that William Jenks should go in search of fresh cartridges to fill the gaping loops in his belt. His successful shot had been almost the last of the long rambling skirmish which had been but the prelude of the serious business that was in the making. While Jenks was still caressing the hot barrel of his rifle and wondering what he could do with himself until ordered to move in some direction, the hills rocked under the first shocks of a tremendous artillery duel. The thin skirmish-line of which Jenks formed a part was enfolded by the great masses of dun-colored infantry which swept up behind them, and the whole mass was spread out in hollows like great windrows, or sent trickling off through steep, scrubby defiles while the batteries thundered over their heads to cut a way for them.

For days tired, wide-eyed officers had studied the black line across the map which stood for the ridge that Jenks and the sun-baked skirmishers had watched. At the end of those days the ways and means for the taking of that ridge had been devised, and the buttons at headquarters had been pressed which sent all the scattered units of the great army tumbling forward in apparently aimless confusion.

While the black ridge became hazy with the smoke of its defending batteries, and scarred from the crashing explosions of shells, the masses of dirty-looking infantry edged and crept in from every side. As the red flashes from the ridge batteries grew fewer, and the officers, through their binoculars, could see the gun-teams (looking like ants in the hazy distance) frantically dragging the battered guns out of the rain of shells, the movement of the brown waves of infantry grew faster, more certain; unguessed lines and straggling blocks of men sprang from cover; deep-slashed defiles spouted forth brown columns, and the converging waves washed and surged about the foot of the black ridge.

Jenks found himself carried along in a mad, frantic tumble up the same slopes that he had grown so tired of watching. For blurred, panting minutes he struggled over slippery footing through saplings and low bushes. The slope grew steeper, and he found himself clutching at grass for support—grass so slender that he knew it would not hold his weight, but which he felt would help him an inch higher and so make another inch possible. His breath came shorter and shorter until it hurt his laboring lungs sharply. The perspiration streamed down his face and gathered in uncomfortable pools under his eyebrows. Above all other things he desired to lie down and pant until he could regain his breath, but the sight of other men—desperately tired as he was but still struggling on—kept him at work.

As yet the fire of the enemy had not commenced to hunt them out. The crash of the artillery was still loud in his ears, but the beating volleys seemed still on other slopes of the ridge. Jenks' breath began to come more easily. The "second wind" had caught him when he needed it most, and he found that his brain was now capable of considering something besides the placing of his feet and the stabbing of the air at his chest.

He wondered hazily why he was racking the very heart out of him in this mad rush up a dark mountain. At the top he would only kill more men in flat caps—if he ever reached the top. He thought of the man he had shot, and no longer felt a species of nausea at the remembrance of the dark, still figure hanging over the rock with such pathetic limpness.

He glanced hastily at the other men around him. They were all strangers; in the rush of the attack he had become separated from the men of his own company. Yet he felt no unease, no panicky desire to find the familiar figures with which he had toiled and fought for three months. These flushed, hot, eager faces about him were not strange, after all. He knew that he must look very much like them at the moment. And they were just plain, ordinary men like himself, with things waiting for them at home. They had no more desire than he to reach the top of the hill and go stabbing with their bayonets among those dark-skinned men in the flat caps!

And yet they went—ran with all the strength of mind and body, as though reaching the crest were the one thing in life to be done. Aye, a thing greater than life itself, for all of these men would not reach the top.

Jenks had always been careful of himself. He had been commended by his officers for his ability to take cover and keep under it without damaging his usefulness. Well, he had not wanted to die. He had feared death as a healthy man with a deep, unanalyzed joy in mere animal life does. And these other men around him were as he was; he felt perfectly sure of that. And yet they went now to certain death without that fear which he knew must have been strong within them. Some greater thing than fear, some greater thing than the love of life was driving them.

A shell ripped through the upper branches of a tree and burst with a crash that set the very centers of his being to twitching. Another followed it, and then the woods were raked mercilessly by the screeching gusts of shrapnel. The men about Jenks did not pause nor look. Some of them sprawled heavily to the earth and lay still; others fell but did not lie still, and their screams and cries mingled with the racket of the firing. The bullets came now, too, whipping through the leaves and branches, plowing into the earth, keeping up their high-pitched music—like the sharp twanging of big wires in the air overhead.

Through the thinning trunks of the trees the bare surface of the crest showed, bending up toward the skyline in a sharper curve. Already its black surface was dotted with crawling brown figures. Jenks looked and knew that out on this slope of rocks was death in a hundred forms. He looked at the men around him, and their faces told him that they knew it, too—but did not care. Nor did he care, not for himself, but because these men about him did not—and they were *his people!*

THEY swept out on the open, uncovered surface of the rocky slope, and the whirring, scythe-like volleys caught them. Jenks did not even bow his head before the metal blast. Instead, he straightened himself and looked up with all his eyes. Everywhere he saw the crawling, scrabbling brown figures, the black rocks, the bursting shells and the clouds of vapor lining the trenches above him. Far ahead and above him he saw a little tricolored moving dot that slipped from rock to rock, disappeared, stopped, came out again, was lost for a second in a wild scramble of brown shapes—but always went on, a little forward, a little farther up. Jenks raised his rifle high above his head. Something wriggled thrillingly inside him, and his full-throated yell sounded high above the roar of battle. Men looked at him with answering shouts as he bent his head and started up the rocks. The tired lines moved faster, Jenks in front; his eyes never leaving that bobbing, tricolored spot above him.

Straight in front, perched on the top of a natural salient of rock, was a battery of Maxims. As yet the enemy had kept the wicked little weapons silent. Their tiny muzzles were trained on the wriggling masses below them, the gunners stood with their hands on the cranks, the open boxes of ammunition waiting beside them, their eyes shifting nervously from the slopes below them to the swarthy officer at their side. At length, when the brown waves swept closer through the shrapnel and bullets, he nodded, and the gunners turned the cranks as easily as a grocer spins the handle of his coffee-mill.

Into the very center of the group around the tricolored dot sprayed the first shower of bullets from the Maxims. On all sides men raised their heads and looked an instant as this new rasping, grinding note sounded through the din. Jenks looked up and saw the bright dot motionless, inert in the center of a still brown pile. He heard the clatter of the Maxims, and again his yell sounded as he bounded up from rock to rock. Once he felt a stab of pain in his arm, again in his leg. He realized that he could no longer raise his rifle, and flung it away.

He was conscious only of three things: that the noise of the Maxims grew steadily louder; that the bright dot was closer, and that he was growing weaker because of something wet which kept sliding away from him down his arm and leg. Through a raging riot of noise and motion he was conscious of reaching down into a tangle of figures for the bright thing which danced crazily before his eyes; of jerking the yellow pole from a thin white hand with a brown stain across it which clung to the wooden pole with cold tenacity. It was hard for him to regain his feet, because another of the streams was slipping down his shoulder now, but he lurched from his knees to his feet with the bright thing (cloth of some sort, he discovered) clinging to his arms and legs and impeding his efforts to go forward.

He sensed rather than knew that the machine-like explosions had ceased and that a wild chorus of shouting was sounding high above the firing. He reached out his hand and clutched the searing-hot barrel of a Maxim. His hand slipped down to the cooler metal of the supporting tripod, and, with the other hand gripped around the flagpole, he tried feebly to ward off the blows of a swarthy officer who was slashing at him with a sword of unnatural brightness——

C JENKS reached out the three fingers of his left hand to accept the cigarette which the drab-colored man proffered him across the foot of the tiny cot.

"Still smoke them pesky things?" he demanded cheerfully.

The journalist replied that he did, and asked Jenks how he was, as he held a match so that the wounded man could light his cigarette.

"Well," answered Jenks as he leaned back comfortably against the pillows, "what's left of me feels pretty good. They take awful good care of me here. 'Bout a dozen nurses comin' in every four or five minutes to see if I don't want somethin', an' more doctors'n I can count. An' eat! Say, mister, I've eat so much since I come here that I'm goin' to be able to fast a year when I get out!

"Yes, I'm goin' to get out. They tell me they was one time they didn't think I would. They had to pare off so much of me to make the rest good for anything. Gangrene, I think they said. I've got one arm an' 'bout a leg an' three-quarters! I'll make a beaut of a farmer, won't I?"

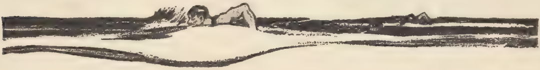
The correspondent leaned on the foot of the bed and asked his question with cold deliberation, for he was very anxious to know some things.

"Don't you wish," he asked, "that you'd gone home that day you and I shot their outpost through the middle?"

"You just bet I don't!" snapped Jenks. "Why, man, all I wanted to do was get home an' 'tend to my farm! I never seemed to think the country needed me! Some reporter chap was in here the other day—few days after they give me this"—and his hand strayed to the medal on his breast, —"an' he 'lowed that maybe we wouldn't have got up that hill if I hadn't picked up that there flag! Now I don't believe that; there was a sight of the boys right behint me, an' one of 'em 'ld 'a' done it if I hadn't—but that ain't the point! A feller's pretty small potatoes after all, and the country's a middlin' big thing. It's a darned sight closer to ye than I used to think, too! It's kind of like a feller's dad, a nice old party like the feller in striped pants an' a long whisker in the papers. He's yer boss, an' that's all there is to it! But when ye get to thinkin' about it, you just plain *want* to do what's up to you to do! Maybe ye have to give somethin' up. I had to leggo of an arm an' a leg! But it was up to me, an' I done it! An' ain't I gettin' took care of 'bout as well as the next one? Yes, sir, Old Man White done me a good turn! I ain't kickin' none!"

And Jenks looked through the smoke of his cigarette at the mass of red roses beside his bed.

The war correspondent shook Jenks' hand and (after a nod from the doctor) dropped several packages of cigarettes on the foot of the bed. Then he walked out of the room feeling unaccountably good, and warm and thankful at the very core of his being—not so much toward Jenks as toward a grotesque picture of a man in a swallow-tailed blue coat, a pair of red-and-white striped trousers and a long goatee.



O'DONNELL, SURFMAN NUMBER SIX

BY FREDERICK ARTHUR DOMINY

IT WAS a gloomy group that lounged about in more or less comfortable attitudes on the boat-room runway and moodily pulled at pipes that hung dejectedly from the corners of their mouths. In the Keeper's office a rumble of voices could be heard and, from the expectant glances the men on the platform occasionally cast at the closed door, it was evident that they were waiting a verdict of some description—and were already convinced that it would be unfavorable—from the occupants of the office.

As the suspense became more and more unbearable, Billy Bennett removed his pipe, expectorated with remarkable accuracy at a fly in front of him, and then, as though displeased with his skill, shook his head dejectedly.

"Ain't no use shakin' your head that-a-way," growled Saunders, Surfman No. 2. "It's done, an' it can't be undone. I don't mean drowndin' that fly," he continued, although nobody had questioned his meaning. "You all know what I mean. Ed Baker's leg is broke, an' the Sup'enten'ent won't let us take on the only man we'd have a chance with, as a sub, but sends us that el'g'ble list to pick from, an' we've got 'bout as much chance of winnin' that cup as a snowball has in some places I could mention."

His air was the air of a man eager to provoke a controversy, but affirmative grunts were his only reply, and it was evident that no one had the spirit to argue the question, so he hitched into a more or less comfortable attitude against the door-casing and gazed surlily at the surrounding sand-dunes.

Something had occurred to upset the usual smooth and cheerful tenor of life at Zachs Inlet Life-Saving Station, that was evident, and in consequence, the crew of that station were a most disheartened set of men.

It had happened as they were drilling with the surf-boat. A wave, and just an ordinary sized wave at that, had rolled up on the beach at a most inopportune moment and, like many other waves, had carried before it everything in its path, incidentally throwing the heavy boat on to Edward Baker, Surfman No. 6, and breaking his leg. This leg at that time was doubly precious, for it furnished a good part of the power which enabled Baker to kick his way through the water to many victories in various swimming contests.

Besides his ability as a swimmer, Baker was able to cover a foot or so more at the standing broad jump than the average man, and consequently was a man valuable for other purposes than those for which he was drawing pay from Uncle Sam.

But while it may seem to you a matter of little moment—this accidental breaking of a surfman's leg, which would mend in the course of a month or so at the least—it was a matter of great importance to the members of the Zachs Inlet crew. If they had not already made their boasts regarding the capture of a certain cup, presented by a retired lieutenant of the Revenue Cutter Service who had once been the Assistant Inspector for their district and was still interested in the service, which was to be contested for on the first day of the inactive season by the three crews on Oak Island, they would not have taken it to heart so badly, and now—well, they might finish a poor third. They could do no worse.

At first, when they had hauled Baker ashore and discovered the broken leg, their chance had not seemed so seriously impaired. To be sure, they were sorry that he had been so unfortunate, but broken legs are not dangerous, and they knew of a man who could replace the injured man. That was one of their first thoughts. Get Charley Suydam to substitute, for substitutes were eligible to contest, and there would be no weakness in their team. But then along came the Superintendent's letter, coldly stating that as Baker would be ~~off for an indefinite~~ period, he was inclosing the list of eligible surfmen for Keeper Rorke to select from, and would thank the Keeper to make his selection immediately.

And that eligible list! Of the five men on it none was known to the crew of Zachs Inlet Station, which made matters worse, if they could be any worse. It was simply a question of choosing blindly, and after hearing the views of the crew, Keeper Rorke and the No. 1 man, Jim Reynolds, had gone into executive session in the Keeper's office.

Finally the scraping of chairs being pushed over the floor was heard and then the office door opened and the Keeper stepped into the boat-room, followed by Reynolds.

Forestalling the questions that were sure to come, he said: "Well, boys, Jim and I have done the best we could. There were two Swedes, one Dutchman, and two Americans on the list and we've picked one of the Americans. Name, William O'Donnell. He must have Irish blood in him. That's about the only reason we took him. I never saw an Irishman, or a half-Irishman for that matter, who wasn't good at something." Perhaps the Keeper was influenced by his own ancestry, for he boasted that many of his ancestors had kissed the Blarney Stone.

So it was settled, and forthwith the list was returned to the Superintendent with the information that William O'Donnell had been selected by Keeper Rorke to fill the vacancy at the Zachs Inlet Life-Saving Station.

WHEN the day came upon which O'Donnell had been notified to report for duty, never had a new surfman's arrival excited so much interest. Even Charley Hulse, the most irresponsible and happy-go-lucky member of the Zachs Inlet crew, gave up the pleasures of twenty-four hours' leave on the mainland in order to be present when he appeared.

Numerous were the conjectures as to his size, weight, and ability. Somehow the impression had arisen that this latest addition to their ranks would be a great, husky six-footer, although their reasons for assuming so could not have been given; and hopes had even been expressed that he would be able to handle the hammer and shot, two of the events in which the Zachs Inlet crew were not particularly good, but for which they were compelled to make entries in the coming contest.

Great was the disappointment, then, to those who had been watching a small-sized sailboat as it gradually neared the beach and was finally anchored in front of the

Station, to see a moderate-sized man throw a dunnage-bag into the dingey towing behind and paddle ashore. The members of the crew who were crowded together in the lookout-tower were loud in their expression of disgust at his appearance.

"Little runt!" growled Billy Bennett. "I don't see how he passed the 'zamination. Ain't over five-foot-five if he's an inch, an' I'll bet he don't weigh one-twenty!"

"An' get on to that walk of his!" added Drake, No. 4. "Looks like he had a wooden leg, he swings it that stiff."

And pessimistic Saunders, delighted to think that his predictions seemed more than ever sure to be realized, exclaimed: "Didn't I tell you so? I said when Baker got hurt an' we found we couldn't get Suydam to sub, that we might jest as well give up any idea of winnin' that cup. He's a hefty lookin' critter to help us out, now, ain't he?"

Unaware of the dismay his personality had caused, the newcomer continued up the path and soon the watchers above heard him stamping the sand from his shoes at the mess-room door. Then the murmur of voices floated up to the tower.

"Might jest as well go down an' get introduced an' get the agony over with," said Bennett. "I don't s'pose he can help it 'cause he's little, an' as he's here we've got to make the best of it."

So four pairs of shoes clumped down the stairs, and as each man entered the mess-room he acknowledged Keeper Rorke's introduction to the man standing beside him with a handshake and a perfunctory "How'd you do?"

A WEEK passed and then another and the momentous day was swiftly drawing near, but still the Zachs Inlet crew were unable to view their chances in anything but the most unfavorable light. There was only one event of which they were sure of, and that was the dash. Billy Bennett was able to negotiate a hundred yards in close to ten seconds at any time, and might do a trifle better if pushed. That they knew, and there was no man in the three stations that was as good by a second, but in all the other trials it seemed as if they would have to be contented with a second or third.

Before Baker's accident they had also been practically sure of winning the swim and the standing broad jump, but now Parker of Gilgo was the most powerful swimmer, and Lee, also of Gilgo, the best jumper in the three stations. The Station slate had been covered a dozen times with figures indicating the points each station was reasonably sure of, and each time the ultimate result was the same. The other stations, Napeague and Gilgo, were credited with twenty-four and twenty-one points respectively, and Zachs Inlet with the remainder, eighteen.

There were seven events, a one-hundred-yard dash, mile run, standing broad jump, swimming race, hammer-throw, shot-put, and last, three men from each station were to compete in a clay-pigeon shoot; and the points were counted at five for first, three for second, and one for third.

Calculate as closely as they could, there seemed to be no other result obtainable, and consequently it seemed inevitable that Zachs Inlet would finish third.

After O'Donnell had been in the Station for nearly a month and had satisfactorily explained the lameness that had so disgusted Saunders by remarking one day that he was recovering from an injury to his knee-cap, Jim Reynolds met him returning from fog patrol and took it upon himself to question him regarding his abilities, explaining the predicament they were in and expressing the hope that he would be able to help toward securing that coveted cup. He had received but little encouragement.

"Sure," O'Donnell had replied, "I'll do what I can for the boys, but that ain't much, I'm thinkin'. I used to be a bit of a swimmer when I was a kid, so mebbe you'd better put me down in that, an' I'll practise up these fine mornin's."

"But ain't there anything you're good at?" earnestly inquired Reynolds. "Ain't there something you can do a little better'n common?"

O'Donnell scratched his head thoughtfully for a moment before he answered and then exclaimed enthusiastically, "Sure an' there is! I'll bet there ain't a man on the beach can beat me jiggin'! But it ain't jiggin' you want?" he asked anxiously, although the twinkle in his eye belied his words.

"Oh, ——!" Reynolds was too disgusted for further reply, and turned toward the Station. Then thinking, perhaps, that even a moderately good swimmer might be of some assistance, he stopped and issued the following order. "Tell you what you do, O'Donnell. You practise swimmin' every time you get a chance, an' mebbe you'll get us a point or two, finishin' second or third."

At a conference the following morning Reynolds detailed the results of his questioning to the little group surrounding him, and what little hopes they might have had were immediately dissipated. "An' all he said he was good at was jiggin'!" growled Saunders. "Jiggin'!" Nothing more expressive than the snort of disgust accompanying this could have been uttered, and Saunders' opinion of O'Donnell's ability was echoed by the others.

"So that's all he can do, eh? Swim a little an' jig. Well, it's sure we can't figure on him, then, an' I reckon that settles it." With this, Bennett arose and walked toward the beach where a hundred yards had been measured off on the hard, smooth sand, close to the water's edge.

The rest of the group followed him and watched him at his training. Three times his flying feet covered the distance in record time, and this sight so cheered the others that for a moment their hopes arose. Then that oft-calculated score, Napeague twenty-four, Gilgo twenty-one, and Zachs Inlet eighteen, was remembered, and Saunders remarked, for about the fortieth time, "T'aint no use. Billy can't win but one thing an' that's already been figgered on."

III

FINALLY the day came and, as some one declared, "it couldn't have been no better if it had been made to order." Bright and clear, with a cool breeze blowing from the ocean along the beach, it was just the weather to incite a man to put forth the best there was in him, and even the Zachs Inlet crew joked and laughed as they tumbled into the Keeper's dory for the four-mile run to Gilgo, the center station of the three, upon the grounds of which the championship of the island was to be settled.

~~Everything was~~ in readiness when they arrived, the Napeague crew having preceded them, so the rules governing the different events were read by one of the judges and agreed upon as satisfactory, and then the entrants for the one-hundred-yard dash were notified to take their positions on the starting-line, and the pistol gave them the signal.

It was Bennett's race from the first. No other sprinter was within fifteen feet of him as he passed the fifty-yard mark, and the race was made interesting only by the hard struggle for second and third positions. Now King of Napeague was a foot or two in front, but the pace was too fast and he dropped behind Havens of Gilgo, and it seemed as if they would finish in that order. But a surprise was sprung upon the spectators in the last fifteen yards. Hulse had been running close behind the two leaders of the second division, and now it became evident that he would be a factor in the race. Inspired, perhaps, by the flying figure of his team-mate, now close to the finishing-line, he made a last desperate attempt for second honors and slowly but surely passed King and challenged Havens in a final burst of speed that put him over the line a scant six inches ahead of the Gilgo man.

Great was the delight of the Zachs Inlet crew at this unlooked-for win, and when the scorekeeper chalked up a large eight on the board opposite their Station's name they almost began to believe that they had a chance.

But it seemed as though that were the only event they were to figure in. Howell of Napeague beat Reynolds' best throw with the hammer by a good ten feet, and another Napeague man was third. Then Reynolds could do no better than finish third in the shot-put, first and second also being won by Napeague. The standing broad jump was easily won by Lee, Gilgo's representative, and it seemed as if that station had a monopoly on jumpers, for they also captured second and third.

Then came the mile run, and this proved another disappointment. Saunders and Drake represented Zachs Inlet in this, and both were confident of finishing well up. In fact, they thought that Haff, Gilgo's entrant, was the only one they could not easily beat, and even if he succeeded in winning, second and third positions would give them four points, which would just put Zachs Inlet in the lead. But they had overrated their abilities. Instead of finishing second and third, they were a good one hundred feet behind Haff when he crossed the line, with Pike and Howell of Napeague close at his heels.

Now the points totaled as follows! Napeague leading with eighteen, Gilgo fifteen, and Zachs Inlet twelve.

It surely looked as if Zachs Inlet's last chance were gone, and the men were correspondingly discouraged. Saunders, who had not finished puffing from his recent exertions in the run, stood in front of the score-board and watched the totals as they were written by the scorer. "Didn't I tell you so?" he declared. "An' there ain't no one to blame but the sup'entendant. Suydam would a' won that mile easy, an' there ain't a man on the beach can beat him shootin' clay birds. We might jest as well pack up an' go home. It's only wastin' time foolin' with that swimmin' race. O'Donnell ain't got a chance."

And it was evident that the others thought the same regarding O'Donnell, their only representative in the swimming match.

But O'Donnell did not seem particularly concerned at this lack of confidence on the part of his team-mates. Instead, he turned to the downcast crew with a smile of encouragement. "Sure, boys, don't be givin' up yet! There's a chance, an' you ain't beat till the last score's counted. Come on an' watch me win that swim," he urged, but they paid no attention to his chatter, so he left them and walked across the beach to the bay in which the swimming race was to be held.

Reynolds looked after his retreating back for a moment and then said: "Come on, boys, let's be decent, anyhow. There ain't a doubt in the world but what he'll get beat, but he belongs to our Station and it ain't hardly right to stay here an' not even watch him."

So they straggled over the beach hills and seated themselves on the bluff overhanging the bay shore. Off about three hundred yards a fair sized float had been anchored, and on this were the starter and the six competitors. The finish was marked by a small boat anchored close to the shore and occupied by the judges.

AT A WORD from the official on the float the swimmers took positions close to its edge and awaited the signal. It was given, and six bodies cleft the water in long, clean dives. For a moment all was a confusion of splashing water, but, as the men came to the surface and struck out sturdily for the judges' boat with long, powerful strokes, they gradually separated and it resolved into a hard-fought struggle with little choice as to the winner.

Half-way in and there was but little difference in their positions; then, as the distance began to tell, changes became apparent in their ranks. Now the stronger swimmers forged ahead, until it finally narrowed down to a fight between two, with the others stringing out behind.

But the men lying about on the bluff were hardly interested.

"If Baker was here that race would be worth seein'," grieved Drake.

"Well, he ain't, so what's the use of kickin' 'bout it?" snapped Hulse. "I don't care who wins the darn cup, anyhow! S'pose O'Donnell's somewhere back with the tail-enders, ain't he, Jim?" he asked, observing that Reynolds had suddenly jumped to his feet and was studying the race intently.

"Stand up an' holler, you chumps!" Reynolds excitedly replied. "If that little cuss ain't givin' Parker the race of his life, I'll eat my hat! Holler, I tell you! Holler!"

And they did. Over the water they sent a yell of delight, of hope, of encouragement. "O'Donnell, O'Donnell!" They shouted. "Come on, you Billy O'Donnell!"

Their discouragement was forgotten. Already it had occurred to them that, with the swimming race won, they had a fighting chance for the cup. Scrambling down the steep, bushy side of the bluff, careless of tumbles and scratches, they rushed to the water's edge, eagerly shouting their team-mate's name and excitedly urging him onward.

And it seemed as if their shouts had the desired effect, for no sooner had the first ones been uttered than O'Donnell shot ahead with a speed that was marvelous. Swimming low in the water with a curious, grasping stroke that was new to the surfmen, he left Parker behind so rapidly that it made him gasp with surprise. Straight toward the judges' boat he swam, gaining on his competitors so easily that it was almost laughable.

"Swim? He can outswim a fish!" Hulse gleefully shouted. "An' we said he never had a chance, we did! Ain't we a smart bunch! Fools! Jest plain ordinary fools, that's what we are!"

Charley could contain himself no longer. As he saw a wet hand grasp the gunwale of the judges' boat and then O'Donnell's face peer over the side, he yelled again with delight, and, dashing into the shoal water, half carried, half dragged, the victorious swimmer ashore into the midst of the wildly hilarious Zachs Inlet crew.

O'Donnell was the only self-possessed man in the crowd. Serenely grinning at the behavior of the others, he let them pull off the bathing-suit he had worn and fairly quarrel over the honor of rubbing him down, and listened indifferently to their praises of his newly discovered ability. Only once did he speak and then it was to remark smilingly: "Sure, boys, I told you I could swim a bit, but it's jiggin' that's my long suit!"

When calm had in a measure been restored during the walk across the beach, they clustered around the score-board to view the revised score. Now the points were so evenly divided among the stations that the shooting-match would decide the matter, and they were fairly confident of their chance in that. Parker of Gilgo had finished second, and Pike of Napeague third, in the swim, so that the board now showed the points as follows: Napeague nineteen, Gilgo eighteen, and Zachs Inlet seventeen.

Little time was left them to discuss this situation, however, for the judges were calling for the trap-shooters, and they hurried to secure favorable positions from which to watch this event.

Each station was represented by a team of three men who were to shoot at twenty birds each, in series of five, and the highest individual scores were to decide the contest. Keeper Rorke, Hulse, and Bennett were the Zachs Inlet entrants, and the Keeper was the first man called. His start promised well for Zachs Inlet, for he broke his five birds in as many shots, but this advantage was not held long, for Howell of Napeague duplicated his feat, although the Gilgo man, Lee, had to be content with four kills.

Then the next three men shot, but Hulse broke but three, while both Napeague's and Gilgo's representatives scored four each.

Now it was up to Bennett to retrieve the lost points, and his mates were confident that he would do it. But where *was* Billy? The scorer was calling his name and the other shooters were showing annoyance at his tardiness.

Reynolds had been scanning the faces of the crowd in an unsuccessful attempt to find him. "Come to think of it," he whispered to the nearest man, "Billy didn't come back 'cross the beach with us, did he?"

"Don't believe he did, though I hadn't missed him," was the reply, and then it was discovered, upon questioning the remainder of the crew, that none of them had seen Bennett since leaving the bay.

"Drake, you go tell the Keeper that Billy'll be there in a minute, an' to get them to go on with the shootin', an' the rest of us'll hunt him up," instructed Reynolds. So the judges were informed that Bennett would be ready to shoot in a short time, and Pike of Napeague faced the trap.

REYNOLDS, Saunders and O'Donnell hurried across the beach and upon arriving at the bay-side discovered that another calamity had overtaken Zachs Inlet. Very white and still, Bennett lay at the foot of the bluff down which they had so wildly rushed to welcome O'Donnell. He looked up at the others with a wan smile. "Thought you'd miss me 'fore long," he said.

"But what's the matter, Billy?" Reynolds inquired.

"Guess I must have turned my ankle when I fell down the hill," he replied. "I yelled at you fellers when I did it, but you was so worked up over that swimmin' race you never heard it. Then I tried to hop along after you left, but my leg hurt so I guess I must have fainted."

"Well, this settles it!" ejaculated Saunders. "If we ain't been runnin' in the darndest luck! First Baker broke his leg an' now Billy here's bunged up so he can't shoot. Jest when we thought we had a chance, too!" he added mournfully. "But it ain't no use!"

And it did look as if the Zachs Inlet crew were hoodooed, but, as Reynolds remarked: "It ain't of no use crying over spilt milk. That shootin'-match is all over, far as we are concerned, for there ain't another man in the crew that can break one of them clay birds out of five. We'll carry Billy over to the station an' then report to Keeper Rorke."

So they carried their crippled mate across the beach and made him comfortable in the boat-room of the Gilgo station. Then, just as Reynolds was about to leave, O'Donnell stopped him.

"If Billy'll lend me his gun," he said, "I'll try to hold my end of that shootin' up."

"But you never said you could shoot," protested Reynolds. "If you think you've got a chance, though——"

"He never said he could swim, either!" broke in Saunders. "That is, he never said he could swim good. By Moses, Jim, let him try it! I begin to believe he's one of them kind that don't brag 'bout what they can do. If he's willin' to shoot, I say let him shoot!"

Saunders, upon receiving a nod from Bennett, hustled about, took the gun out of its case, put it together, and handed it to O'Donnell.

"Now, son," he instructed him, "you hurry out there an' do your darndest. If you get beat there won't be any hard feelings 'bout it, anyhow."

When the judges were informed of Bennett's accident they consented to O'Donnell's taking his place, and immediately sent him to the trap.

He missed the first bird and a despairing groan arose from the Zachs Inlet crew. Then he broke the next four, and that groan was changed into a joyful cheer.

The shooting continued, and as Keeper Rorke broke bird after bird, and O'Donnell did not seem to know what it was to miss after that first lost bird, it became evident that again this "little runt," as Bennett had called him, was the mainstay of their team.

Then the Keeper missed one, but recovered and broke his last five cleanly, retiring with a score of nineteen broken, which was evidently most satisfactory to him, if you could judge from the smile upon his face. Now O'Donnell's name was called. He was the last man to shoot and upon the result of those five shots hung the championship.

Keeper Rorke was high man with nineteen, and Howell and Pike of Napeague were tied with eighteen each. If O'Donnell did not beat the Napeague shooters, the Keeper's score would do no good, as the five points would make Zachs Inlet but twenty-two, while Napeague, with a second and third, counting four, would total twenty-three points.

He was by far the calmest man in the crowd when he faced the trap. With fourteen breaks to his credit it meant that he would have to make a clean score on these next five birds to win the championship for his station. One miss, and he would tie the Napeaguers. Two missed, and the cup was surely lost.

"Are you ready?" he coolly asked the trapper. "Ready!" was the reply. "Pull!" *Crack!* That target was broken into a thousand particles. Again the question and reply, followed by the sharp command, "Pull!" and another target smashed.

Saunders was hysterically patting Reynolds on the back and muttering what was meant as words of encouragement to the shooter.

Two more of the clay saucers were broken by that impassive man facing the trap, and now he was calmly loading his gun for the final shot.

"S'pose he misses it!" whispered Reynolds.

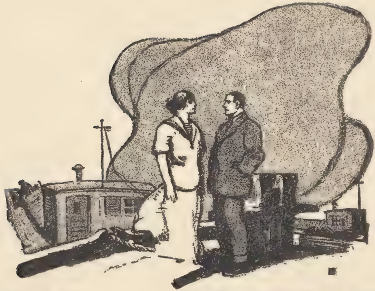
"He ain't a-goin' to!" Saunders replied earnestly. "Didn't I tell you so?" he shouted as the gun cracked and the last target was broken. But Reynolds did not hear him, for his shout was drowned in the cheer that arose from the others of the Zachs Inlet crew and their adherents among the spectators.

There was an excited group surrounding O'Donnell, who did not have to await the judges' decision. They knew they were the champions of Oak Island, and they also knew that but for this little man in their midst they would have lost. They were all talking at once, but O'Donnell listened with a composed countenance to their extravagant praises until Reynolds lifted his voice above the rest.

"He don't look like he amounted to much," he cried, "but, boys, I want to tell you right here, we'll know better'n to pick a man by his size next time!"

Then he was interrupted. "Say, Jim," inquired the object of this flattery, "sure an' there's one thing I'd like to know, an' that's this: Do you think there's a man on the island can beat me jiggin'?"

And Reynolds, remembering his reply when that same subject had been introduced before, repeated it. "Oh, ——!" he said, but this time his voice did not express disgust and annoyance.



DAD and DESTINY

BY JOHN A. HEFFERNAN

A FORMLESS, fringy, low-lying, white-brown-and-yellow thing, for all the world like a fried egg afloat, drifted between the blunt-nosed ferry-boat and her slip. It was the canal-boat caravan, the loosely articulated, hawser-bound "Albany tow" with its flat white deckhouses and yellow-striped gunwales and its fluttering lines of checked jumpers, white petticoats and such, all fresh from the wash-buckets. Fussy tugs pulled at great cables ahead, fussy tugs scurried around the flanks, trimming in the loose ends.

Sharp and fierce the signal bells rang in the engine-room of the ferry-boat and the ancient craft trembled under the strain as her paddle-wheels beat in reversal. The waters gurgled and churned and a stream of foamy soap-suds surged out from under the bows.

Two men stood on the forward deck, leaning against the heavy railing. The ruffled silk hat of one of them was pulled down over his eyes. The eyes were slightly bloodshot because the owner of them had been drinking, but otherwise they were very pleasant gray eyes, just as the face with its smooth, broad brow and straight, beardless features was a very pleasant face. The garments of the young man—he was about twenty-five—were of fashionable material, although somewhat tousled like his brown hair, and they fitted well a clean-limbed, six-foot frame.

The other was older, although not much; a short, stocky fellow with an aggressively protuberant chest, sharp features and narrow, shrewd, humorous eyes. His cutaway coat, gray trousers and black derby hat were speckless, his patent-leather shoes refulgent, his gray silk waistcoat was buttoned with diamond-centered pearl discs and his lavender scarf was held by a big diamond pin.

Although standing side by side they had not spoken since the ferry-boat left the Brooklyn shore. The older man glanced occasionally at the younger, the younger glared gloomily down at the waters. The foamy streak from the paddle-boxes caught his sight and excited his disapproval.

"Thought I wash on the fron' o' thish boat?" he said, addressing the other.

"Right you were, bo!" was the cheery answer.

"Um! Wah—when 'd we turn aroun'?"

"Didn't. She's backing up."

"Goin' back to Brooklyn?"

"Looks like it."

"Well, she c'n go ish she likes; I'm not!" said the younger man decisively and he jumped overboard.

"Oi-yoi!" exclaimed the other in amazement. "Man overboard!" he yelled, raising his voice so that it rang throughout the vessel. Quickly he slipped off his coat, transferred a gold watch from the fob pocket of his trousers to the inside pocket of the outer garment, folded the latter neatly, laid it on the deck, and, jumping upon the flat top of the railing, dove into the white surge.

Fifty feet away the other man came to the surface, shook the brine from his eyes with a vigorous twist of his head and flung his right hand forward in a powerful, practised overhand stroke. He was heading for the canal-boats, which were nearer to him than the rapidly receding ferry-boat, but he looked back in time to see the man in the gray silk waistcoat plunge from the rail after him. The chill of the river had cleared his brain and he understood. With some anxiety he watched the bobbing head of the other swimmer. The latter made progress slowly and, as he approached, it was quite plain that he was laboring hard. Gray-eyes turned and went after him and drew up alongside with a few of his long reaches.

"How are you?" he asked.

"'Bout all—all in!" gasped the other. "Got-got a —— cramp in—in my—*gurgle-gurgle!*"

The waves closed over his head. Gray-eyes slipped down and caught him and without difficulty got him back to the surface.

"Lie perfectly quiet!" he admonished, holding him by the collar and swimming easily on his back.

"All right," the stocky chap answered.

Meanwhile in wild excitement passengers were crowding upon the deck of the ferry-boat, that calliope cry, "Man overboard!" having drawn them in haste from the cabins. Blue-shirted deckhands were loosening coils of rope and tying big cruller-shaped life-preservers to the ends of them. The man in the pilot-house signaled "Slow speed ahead!" to the engine-room and tooted like mad with his whistle.

Tidal action had swung the canal-boat flotilla around so that the tail of it was within one hundred feet of the two men in the water and Gray-eyes struck out for the nearer craft. It was easy work for him to make the distance; he soon grasped the line dropped over the side, and, still holding his companion by the collar, looked up into a pair of very large brown eyes that peered over the rail of a big grain-barge.

"Thanks!" he said, grinning.

The possessor of the big brown eyes nodded acknowledgment.

"Hold tight!" she directed. "I'll slip a ladder down to you."

A minute later the end of a long ladder fell beside him and he swung around so that his companion could catch a rung.

"Can you climb up, or shall I carry you?" he asked.

"I can make it," the short man replied briefly.

"All right; you go first and I'll follow you."

SO THEY ascended the ladder and gained the deck, and the ferry-boat pilot, seeing them safe if soppy, swore with remarkable enthusiasm, put his helm hard-a-starboard, and edged around to the rear of the tow.

Gray-eyes looked at the girl who was standing on the deck. She was a splendid creature, with raven hair coiled braid upon braid upon the back of her head, glorious eyes with tawny glints in the depths of them, sun-tanned cheeks through which the roses glowed, lips of scarlet, and shining, strong teeth. A soft felt hat was pinned to the masses of her hair and a canvas waist with a wide brown collar fell away from her glorious neck and rested loosely upon her full bosom across which her bare brown arms were folded. With her canvas skirt snapping around her in the brisk river breeze and the low western sunbeams slanting down upon her over the irregular sky-line of New York, with the western windows all aflame and the scarlet clouds fluttering like pennants in the amethystine depths, Gray-eyes concluded that he had never seen a picture so magnificent.

Further thought upon the subject was arrested by a vigorous smite on the nose. The young man's eyes blazed with anger and, clutching the brother of his adventure by the wet front of his diamond-decked waistcoat with his left hand, he drew back his right hand to return the blow he had received so unexpectedly. The short man threw up his hands to guard his head in a manner that indicated some familiarity with the rules of the game, but the fingers that gripped his chest were fingers of steel;

and he was helpless because of the long reach of the outstretched arm. Gray-eyes curbed his anger instantly and instead of driving in his clenched right hand, he opened it and rubbed his bruised nose with it.

The girl said nothing, but looked from one to the other curiously.

"What did you do that for?" Gray-eyes asked.

"For what?" echoed the other in pure amazement. "Hey, bo, see yon Kelly on the sad sea waves? It cost me six only last night! And on the deck of that ferry-boat is a black broadcloth coat, 1911 model, inside of which is my gilt timer with wheels that go round and round, price one hundred and fifty! Lost, bo! Lost! And just because you wanted to get as much water outside as you had booze inside, and I thought it was up to me to pull you out of the wet! Do you think I'd let any one come across with a play like that and no come-back?"

"You tried to save my life?" said Gray-eyes.

"Nix on the melodrama," protested the other. "And by the way, you're rumpling up my shirt-front something awful. You can throw off your clutch—I've decided to let you live."

"Thank you," said Gray-eyes, grinning as he released him.

The short man raised an inquiring thumb and two inquiring fingers to his scarf-pin. Then he dropped his chin on his soppy shirt-front and deliberately counted the buttons on his waistcoat.

"You didn't take anything away but your hand," he said at last, approvingly.

The younger man flushed. "I am not a thief," he said coldly.

"That's what I said," assented the short man tranquilly. "Now if you'll tell me your name, I'll introduce you to this lovely skirt."

"My name is Harold Armitage."

"Oh, Harold!" murmured the short man joyously. "Madam," he went on, turning with a bow to the brown-eyed girl, "allow me to present muh moist friend, Mr. Harold Armitage. I've known him at least a quarter of an hour on land and sea, and it has been some crowded. Mr. Armitage, this is Miss— Name, please!"

"My name is Elaine," said the girl gravely.

"Oof!" grunted the short man, catching his breath. "Ah! Mr. Armitage this is Miss Elaine. You've got to hand it to her for being some good-looker, and her name listens like a book. And now, Miss Elaine, would you mind presenting me to your friend? We have met somewhere, but have had no formal introduction."

The girl looked at him, unsmiling. "Name, please?" she asked.

"I might tell you it was Adelbert Percy Fitz-Fitz, but it ain't," he answered. "I'm just Jake Buchmuller."

"Mr. Armitage, Mr. Buchmuller," said the girl seriously. "If you gentlemen," she went on, "will sit down on these hatches a few minutes, I will see what can be done in the way of dry garments."

She turned on her heel and swung off down the deck. Jake looked after her, approbation written all over his expressive features.

"If," he sighed at last, "that skirt is the captain's little daughter, lash me to the mast, matey; I'll never desert the ship!"

Harold nodded.

Jake plunged his hands into his trousers pockets. Instantly he emitted a loud wail.

"Oi-yoi! Oi-yoi!" he moaned, seating himself upon the hatch covers and rocking his body to and fro. "It's gone, it's gone!"

"What's gone?" asked Harold.

"Muh bankroll! Muh lovely little bunch of money! Oi-yoi! Oi-yoi!"

"How much was in it?"

"Five hundred and thirty dollars!"

Harold drew from his pocket a package of moist bills and began to count:

"Fifty, a hundred, one-ten, twenty, thirty, fifty, seventy, eighty, two-hundred, two-ten, two-fifteen, two-seventeen—two hundred and seventeen dollars." He looked up. "I'll have to owe you the balance; this is all I have," he said. "And heaven knows when I am going to get any more!" he added.

"Not on your silhouette!" shouted Jake, indignantly waving back the proffered bills. "I'm no cheap sport, kid. You can lend me a twenty to tide me over, if you care to, but that'll be about all in that line. As for what's gone, it's gone, and there's no dividends in weeps over burnt money, as the Bible says. But tell me, did deponent truly state or were you stalling on the name-plate?"

"Eh?"

"That Harold Armitage business. Is that what they call you back home?"

Harold laughed. "Yes," he said, "that's my real name. You've probably heard of dad. He is Thomas Armitage."

"Not Armitage & Barnes' Frazzled Friskies?"

"U-hum. I'm the son of 'the King of Breakfast Foods.' I was going to say son and heir, but we had a row yesterday and I was thrown out of house, home, allowance and will. Dad has a real warm, red-headed temper."

"Now Harold—you'll excuse me for pulling on the front doorbell but I do love to say Harold—I *know* you ought to have your nut examined. Getting a souse on and jumping into a wet river is just an indication, but having a serious fight with paternal millions is proof positive of bats in the loft. Did you ever try earning a living?"

"No, not yet."

"It's some more complicated than running an automobile. A fellow that doesn't have to shouldn't jump into it without serious consideration. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I have just come back from Paris where some money was spent teaching me to paint pictures. But I'm afraid I couldn't sell them."

"Leave that to me, bo. You paint and I'll be the selling end. What do you say to the firm of Armitage & Buchmuller?"

Harold clasped Jake's outstretched hand and shook it heartily.

"You're a pretty good sort, Buchmuller," he said. "We'll try it out. What's your plan of campaign?"

"Can you paint human things?"

"Yes—you mean portraits?"

"Then Job Number 1 for you is to paint a picture of Peaches. If I don't sell it to a complexion-cream outfit I'll eat it. Here she comes now. Just let me make all the arrangements."

ELAINE came swinging aft, her arms full of check jumpers and blue denim trousers. Jake advanced to meet her.

"Miss Elaine," he asked, "are you the skipper's daughter?"

"No," she answered, "I am the skipper."

"Oof!" exclaimed Jake. "Well, Cap, we would very much like to take the trip to Buffalo with you. How much would it cost us, American plan?"

For the first time Elaine showed some slight signs of confusion. "Well, I—I don't know," she stammered. "We should be glad to have you of course, but——"

"Perhaps," interjected Harold, "Miss Elaine is er-er unchaperoned and——"

"No, that's not it," she said, turning to him. "My brother is on board with his wife and her sister and a young man friend; but you see we never have taken passengers before and——"

"You don't know what to charge," Jake broke in. "All right, Captain, suppose we take half the railroad fare from New York to Buffalo for a basis and add ten a week for the eats and berths."

"That would do very well," said Elaine. "Follow me, please."

She led them to the bow of the barge and down a companion ladder to the main cabin. Jake drew in his breath quickly as they entered. A handsome rug lay upon the floor, silken curtains of Nile green draped the little ports, and a small piano stood in one corner. There were cosy wicker lounging-chairs and divans, a reading-table of polished oak and a revolving bookcase whose shelves were full of handsomely bound volumes.

Some embroidery lay in a woman's work-basket on top of the bookcase and a dozen magazines were heaped upon the table. From this compartment a companionway led aft, and on each side of it were neat little white staterooms with comfortable rocking-chairs and cosy brass beds. Into one of these the girl ushered the two young men.

"This is our only spare room," she said. "You will have to share it." She deposited her armful of clothing on the bed and went on: "The dining-room is at the other end of the boat. When you have changed your clothing come right aft and meet the others. We have dinner at six." She flashed a golden smile at them and vanished.

Jake turned a dazed look upon Harold.

"Would you mind pinching me, bo?" he asked feebly.

"Why, what's the matter?" Harold asked.

"I just want to make sure I am awake," responded Buchmuller. "Recent experiences suggest to me that I'm either in a dream or pleasantly dippy, like the bug who has a kink that he's John D. Rockefeller. I'm the little fellow who tells real estate men they ought to advertise. For ten years I have been blowing all the surplus earnings of muh business in a foolish endeavor to put a good one over on the bookies. Yesterday, when I'm down to hard-pan, behold, bo! they really win at big money and I sail home with a thousand in muh kick. Muh for the realization of muh dreams, new clothes, flashes for the necktie and vest buttons, the gold tick-tick!

"But see how wealth takes wings and the tide of fortune, taken at the flood, biffs you most unexpected and cruel. Riches this morning, and the fishes playing with muh bank-roll before the sun sets! In the water, out of the water, and up we come on a canal-boat which a fairy with a wide smile presto-changos into the St. Regis. Now Harold—how I love that name!—are you *sure* that we're awake?"

"Quite sure," Harold answered with a laugh. "This is a nice little stateroom, old fellow, but it's not the St. Regis."

"You've been in the St. Regis?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever been on a canaller?"

"No."

"Well, I have. And, take it from me, bo, that you may know that this is not the St. Regis, but I know it isn't any canaller either! Besides which these blue-jeans are too brand new to look the part. And no bloomin' low-bridge expert tramps the tow-path in fifteen-dollar suits of underwear!"

This last observation was due to the discovery that two comfortable suits of underclothing had been laid out upon the counterpane.

Harold did not answer. He was too busy divesting himself of his wet garments and replacing them with the dry, warm habiliments so kindly provided.

"A little scant, but nice and comfy," he commented, sitting on the bed and ruefully surveying the hiatus between the rims of his trouser legs and the tops of his misfit shoes.

"You'll have to put flounces on those, bo," remarked Jake, bending over to fold up neatly the surplus length of his own garments. "Now," he observed, as he stood up straight and pirouetted up and down the cabin, "see that neat and fashionable cuff? You may have it on me for name and lineage, Harold, but as a nobby dresser—fade, bo, fade, I've got you skinned and on the pan!"

Harold paused with a comb stuck in his hair.

"By the way, partner," he said, "we forgot one item in our business arrangements. A painter must have paint to paint."

"Sounds like a music-hall gag or a conundrum," mumbled Jake, taking his scarf-pin out of his mouth and fastening the neck of his jumper with it. "However, don't let it spoil your digestion; we'll tie up at some river town and you can go ashore and buy the paint."

Rather timidly they made their way to the after deckhouse. A big oak dining-table occupied the center of it and a handsome sideboard stood against the bulkhead.

"Get hep to the sidebar," murmured Jake to himself. "Cut glass, too!"

Two young women and two men were in the room with Elaine as the guests entered. She introduced one of the men as her brother, Mr. Daniels, and the other as Mr. Brough. Daniels looked enough like Elaine to confirm the introductory explanation and Mr. Brough was a lean young chap with a sandy mustache and a languid manner. Mrs. Daniels was a blue-eyed, golden-haired matron of twenty-five, and Polly Hawkins, her sister, was a slim eighteen-year-old lassie in a tidy checked kitchen apron.

The men were clothed in blue-jeans and jumpers and the women in canvas blouses and skirts. Harold and Jake were cordially welcomed and took the seats Elaine assigned them at the table. Their afternoon's experience had put a razor-edge on their appetites and they thoroughly enjoyed the substantial dinner set before them. At the conclusion of the meal Daniels reached into the sideboard and drew forth a box of cigars.

"We generally smoke these after dinner," he explained as he passed the box to Jake. "During the day we smoke corn-cobs. I'll put a couple and a box of tobacco in your room. If you don't care for the pipe, however, you can always find the cigars in this cupboard."

AS THEY pulled comforters over them in their cosy stateroom that evening Harold concluded that canal-boat life was the most joyous life a human being could live. They had spent the evening lounging and reading in the forward cabin. Jake had entertained them with several popular songs sung to Polly's rattling accompaniment, and, best of all, Harold and Elaine had had a tramp around the deck in the moonlight that bathed bank and boat, darkling shore and sparkling river. She was not too communicative about her business, but he gathered that the barge had come down to New York flour-laden and was going back empty. It struck him that there was some difference between his hosts and the crews of the craft lashed alongside, but he dismissed the question with the reflection that canal society had its gradations like all other societies. And truly, Elaine had wonderful eyes!

Jake nudged him in the ribs. "What did you fight with your dad about?" he asked.

"Uh?" mumbled Harold.

"Why did you leave home and all the money—a skirt?"

"Something like," yawned Harold. "He wanted to marry me to his partner's daughter 'n' I—was—umble, umble——"

"You don't tell me?" snorted Jake in deep disgust. "Well, a guy that can go to sleep telling how he lost a few million doesn't deserve to have money! Ugh!"

And Jake fell asleep also.

"HEIGH-HO!" exclaimed Jake, as they turned out to the tune of a clamorous tom-tom at six the following morning, "how do you like life on the bounding marine?"

"All right!" answered Harold, rubbing sleep-heavy lids. "But why all the racket so early in the morning? Is the ship afire?"

"Nay, bo; it's pipe all hands to grog—I mean to grub," Jake explained. "And—*toot! toot!* little bright-eyes—on this marvel of a canaller they supply passengers with a razor!"

They shaved rapidly and hurried aft. In the dining-room Polly, again wrapped in her kitchen apron, and Mrs. Daniels, similarly swathed, were skipping back and forth with steaming platters of buckwheat cakes while Elaine could be glimpsed in the galley beyond, transferring slices of red and white bacon from the frying pan to a mammoth serving-dish. Daniels was pouring coffee and Brough was dragging the chairs up to the table.

"Hi there, Armitage! Get that big knife and cut the bread!" yelled Daniels cheerfully. "Buchmuller, help Polly in with the buckwheats!"

Soon they were all at the table eating with a North River appetite of which Armitage was rather ashamed, but Jake was as proud as a peacock.

"Now what have we to do, Cap?" he asked of Elaine. "We want to be part of the crew and jump in and work with the rest, you know."

Elaine seemed at a loss. Her brother hurried to the rescue.

"As we are traveling empty there is really nothing to do, you know," he said. "We generally sit around the deck and read and smoke—that is Brough and I smoke—and watch the scenery. You see?"

"Yes," said Jake, "I see. How could a fellow help seeing," he went on under his breath, "when it's as clear as mud?"

As they went on deck he observed a lean person whose long legs were encased in cowhide boots and whose chin-whisker of red and gray looked like the spike on a picket fence. This person was smoking a black clay pipe and leaning his back against the tiller.

"Who's your steersman, bo?" Jake whispered in Daniels' ear.

A slight flush crept into the young man's cheeks.

"He belongs on the next boat," he explained. "He comes over to give us a hand in a neighborly kind of way, you know, when we're busy. How are you, Hiram?"

The lean person straightened up stiffly and touched his brow with a weatherbeaten fore-finger.

"Good morning—"

Polly, who stood beside them, placed her hand on her heart.

"—sir," said the helmsman.

"Ahhhhh!" sighed Polly softly.

But Jake didn't seem to have noticed anything. He followed Elaine and Harold forward, looking down at the deck. To himself he was saying, "For the love of Mike, what are we up against?"

THAT night Elaine and Harold sat on the hatch-covers, the girl resting her elbows on her knees and clasping her hands as she looked up into his face. The lights of Saugerties twinkled off the port quarter and a rippling streamer of silver moonlight lay like a bar upon the river. Armitage had just told the girl of the quarrel with his father.

"But why does he insist that you marry

her?" she asked. "Is it because she has—has money?"

"Oh, no," he answered quickly. "Dad has a bunch of it himself and doesn't care about that end of it. But you see her father and he were mining partners years ago and made their first big strike together and they have been brothers in business ever since. It seems that when both of us were babies they made it up between them that we were to marry."

"Well, why don't you marry her? Isn't she a nice girl?"

"Oh, I suppose she's nice enough—I've never seen her," he answered. "You see, he took care of the Western end, the manufacturing, and dad ran the advertising and selling in New York, and then when I was fifteen I was packed off to boarding school and later to college and then to Paris to cultivate what I thought was a talent for painting. I have just come home and find that he has it all arranged that I am to marry a girl who probably has as little taste for the thing as I have. He insisted, I objected, there were fire-crackers and I got out."

"Is that the only reason you did not want to marry her?"

Harold lifted his glance and looked straight into Elaine's brown eyes.

"That *was* the only reason," he said.

"'Was?'" she repeated softly, looking out over the waters.

"Yes," he answered, "was. There is another reason now."

"What is her name?" Elaine asked.

Armitage started. "You wouldn't really like me to tell you that, now would you?" he asked quietly.

"No," she answered. "I should think you horrid if you did."

She looked a while at the red dot of the port lantern. Then she turned her eyes in the direction of the thin yellow streamers that escaped from the cabin windows through which escaped also Jake's gay voice raised in song, and the tinkle of Polly's vivacious obligato.

"The other reason?" she said softly, her lashes falling.

"Why, Elaine, you are the other reason," he said, looking up at her frankly. "I do not want to be offensive and I haven't any hope, but it won't hurt you to know, and perhaps it will help me. If I were any good—if I had been taught how to make a living instead of painting pictures no one would buy—why, I'd try to make you love me and marry me, but— Oh, do not think too little of me, Elaine, because you are a splendid, competent worker of the world, and I am a good-for-nothing. I'll learn how—in time."

"Your father may relent," the girl suggested, her lashes still brushing her cheeks.

"You don't know my dad," Harold answered, shaking his head.

"But I think you can win out alone," she said, looking up at him suddenly.

Harold looked into her face in a frank, level-eyed way he had.

"You are right," he said without the slightest suggestion of a boast in tone or manner, "I can. But," he added, "it wouldn't be the square thing to ask any girl to bet on me."

Even in the pale moonlight he could see the cloud of color that surged into her face as she bent her head and whispered:

"I would be willing to bet on you, Harold!"

The singing had ceased in the forward cabin. Jake Buchmuller stepped out on deck, the red tip of his cigar brightening and fading, and the smoke of it curling back over his shoulder. He looked at the little tugboats ahead and then swept a careless glance back at the barges strung out astern. Something dark against the white hatchcovers, on the port side amidships, arrested his wandering glance.

"Is it one or are it two?" he murmured after a minute of careful scrutiny.

"It are two," he answered his own question a minute later, and discreetly turned his eyes ahead.

"That young man," he remarked confidentially to the hawser-ring at his feet, "is some rapid, even if his name is Harold. In ten minutes he makes a life-long friend of me and now he's kissing the Captain of this blooming ship!"

Having delivered himself of which Jake went below and turned in.

ALL the way up the river Mr. Buchmuller's crowning joy was the enthusiasm of Polly. That young lady was just bursting with information concerning the canal-boat trade, and Jake drank it in as the dry earth drinks up the Summer showers.

"Now what was it you told me you were

carrying last trip?" he encouraged her one morning as he aided her in the culinary task of peeling potatoes.

"Lobsters," answered Polly demurely, tossing a denuded Murphy into a capacious sauce-pan.

Jake looked at her with baby eyes.

"How very interesting!" he said.

"Yes," said Polly, "it was a great sight to look down in the hold and see them fighting, millions and millions of them."

"It must have been," Jake replied with conviction.

"Yes," Polly went on with growing enthusiasm, "and one night they er—mutinied."

"Mutinied?" gasped Jake.

"Um," said Polly. "They all came clambering up on deck and we barred ourselves in the cabin and drove them back at the point of our pistols!"

"Gee!" exclaimed Jake.

Polly sighed. "The trip before that wasn't very romantic," she said.

"No?" queried Jake.

"No," said Polly. "We had on board a hundred thousand hogsheads of flour. It took us girls two days to get it on board."

"Gracious, how do you do such hard work and keep your hands so nice and soft?"

"Oh," said Polly, "we always wear our gloves when we're handling hogsheads, of course!"

"Of course; how stupid of me!" said Jake.

Elaine's appearance in the cabin stopped the flow of Polly's eloquence and Jake retreated to his room. From the little port of that apartment strange, muffled sounds issued, and the skipper of the barge alongside, peering through, saw a short man trying to swallow a feather pillow and making a terrible pother about it.

THE flotilla halted at Albany, and next afternoon, just as they were about to resume the journey, the crew of the grain-barge were startled by the wild croak of a horn and the roar of an unmuffled six-cylinder. A big touring-car tore down the dock and pulled up with a creaking of protesting brakes at the barge's side. Out of the tonneau jumped a ruddy, spectacled old gentleman with streaming gray sidewhiskers. With surprising agility he leaped over the string-piece and landed upon the deck.

"Dad!" gasped Harold, in blank amazement.

"Hello, you obstinate young scamp!" his father saluted. "I knew you'd knuckle under to the old man—they all do when he puts his foot down, you bet your life! But how did you get him on the barge, Edie?"

Elaine looked up, her face crimson and her hand reaching out in appeal toward Harold. Instead of answering the old gentleman she spoke to his son.

"There isn't any Elaine, Harold," she said. "I'm Edith Barnes."

Harold looked at her with dazed eyes. "And all this——" he said, looking around at the barge.

"Why, it's simple enough," she answered. "This barge belongs to your father and mine. Richie and Nell and Polly and I were tired of town and thought a canal-boat trip would be a delightful lark. Dick had the boat altered a little and furnished, and we were just starting on our trip when you came on board, rather unceremoniously. When I heard your name it occurred to me that it would be a splendid chance to find out what kind of chap father had picked out for me—you will forgive me for fooling you, won't you, Harold?"

"Forgive you, dear girl! Why it's been fine! But—but how did *you* know about it, father?"

The elder Armitage plunged his hand into his breast pocket and drew forth a telegraphic dispatch.

"How did I know about it?" he cried, thrusting the paper into Harold's hand. "Didn't you send me this?"

With their heads together Harold and Elaine read:

> You win. I have just become engaged to Edith Barnes. Bat the corpulent calf on the brow and chase me a check. HAROLD.

"I was so—so—so dingbusted glad that I hustled up on a special myself, just to see if it was true!" exploded Mr. Armitage.

But Edith had turned an accusing eye upon Jake. He threw up his hands.

"Guilty!" he confessed. "I thought the old guy might be worried, and what was the use keeping him on the griddle?"

"But how did you know? Did Polly—?"

"Don't pass it up to Polly! She's been having the time of her life kidding me, haven't you, Polly? As for the engagement part, why, Harold has been murmuring things in his sleep. And as for the rest, you should have heard the nice early morning chats I have had with old Chinny-chin-chin who plays with the tiller. He told me how much per he got for being so neighborly and who paid him. And then it was an oversight, Cap, to leave that plate on the tiller-post!" He pointed to a nickel-plated sign which bore the inscription:

Armitage & Barnes—Barge No. 12.

"And I thought I had you fooled as badly as Harold was!" Polly complained in heart-broken tones.

"Oi-yoi!" chortled Jake. "Living the simple canal-boat life with perfectos for after dinner and ten-dollar-a-pound mixture for our humble corn-cob pipes! Maiden, I may look like a simple child of nature from the far-off reservation, but believe *me*, my wigwam's hard by little old Broadway!"

THE SEEDS OF DESTRUCTION

A "GRAY GHOST" STORY by MURIEL A. POLLEXFEN

EVA DARIEN had waited dinner until after nine o'clock and still her brother Carlile had neither turned up nor sent the usual message explaining the delay; he had not even 'phoned her to expect it.

It was so unusual and so unlike him that Eva began to feel vaguely anxious. Then, at ten-thirty, the vagueness became a certainty—acute—intense—unbearable. So much so that at ten-forty-five she rang up his clubs, only to ascertain that he had been at neither of them at any time that evening.

At one of them—the Aviators'—the commissionaire said that Mr. Darien had been expected there to meet Lord Fenton Henry at seven o'clock and that Lord Fenton had left a message with him in case Mr. Darien had been delayed and should turn up later. He repeated the message over the wire at Eva's request, and as she listened she suddenly realized that the situation was alarmingly serious.

For Lord Fenton Henry could do great things for those in whose favor he interested himself, and the message the commissionaire repeated was of such tremendous consequence to Carlile's future career that only a man who was either a fool or else prevented by some extraordinary happening would have permitted himself to be deterred from keeping an appointment of such importance and magnitude. And Carlile was no fool.

With beating heart and swimming brain his sister hung up the receiver and sank back inertly in her chair. What had happened? What *could* have happened?

What was to be done? Ring up the hospitals in case there should have been an accident? But surely if there had been, she would have heard of it ere this. Carlile was a public man, secretary to Sir Dean Densham of the Secret Service, known to Scotland Yard and every possible constable in London. Sir Dean! Why, perhaps Sir

Dean would know something! Or at least he would be able to advise her.

She picked off the receiver again and listened impatiently for the operator's voice. It was fully three minutes before she got through and the tension of her nerves was growing tighter every second. She held the line while the servant made inquiries, and it was with a mixture of gratification and alarm that she heard Sir Dean himself reply to her after a short interval.

"Is that Miss Darien? Good-evening. My man tells me you are asking for your brother. But surely he is at home? No, no, quite close here—just across the road—the Foreign Office, to be exact. Yes, he told me he was to meet Lord Fenton at seven o'clock. I remember commenting on it and saying it would probably lead to a good thing. Left here a little before six. Yes, I admit it is strange, but do not permit yourself to get anxious just yet. He may have been detained—he may have forgotten the appointment."

"Oh, no, Sir Dean! It was prominent in his mind from the moment it was made. I know he was building so much on a meeting with Lord Fenton, though I did not know it was for to-night. He *can't* have forgotten it!"

"I must confess it is not likely—still——"

"Was there no answer required to your errand, Sir Dean? Do you know if he ever went to the F. O.?"

Eva, as she put the question, could have sworn that she heard a peculiar click come from Sir Dean's end of the wire—a sharp click as though he had suddenly gritted his teeth together in quick annoyance.

There was a perceptible pause before his answer came, and when it did come it was given slowly and haltingly, as though he were weighing most carefully every word—giving each word a momentous meaning and gravity.

"To be perfectly frank with you, Miss Darien, your question has startled me. Your brother left me with a wallet of papers for the Foreign Office at about ten or five minutes to six. At six o'clock a telephone message came through that the papers were safely delivered. I was in rather a hurry and did nothing more than receive the message. I thought at the time it was Darien's voice—Darien in a hurry——"

"And now?" asked Eva sharply.

"And now I'm not so sure. I should not like to swear to it——"

Eva uttered a gasp of dismay—then her quick brain leaped to a sudden understanding.

"One question, Sir Dean! If no message had come through at all, would you have made inquiries at the time?"

Sir Dean hesitated for the barest fraction of a second. Then: "Yes, Miss Darien, I would have made inquiries. It was arranged between us that your brother was to telephone me on the private wire so soon as the papers were in the care of Mr. Follett. If no message had come through I should have been uneasy."

EVA put up the receiver with a chill fear growing up round her heart. Her worst forebodings were becoming stronger and stronger every moment. Something had happened to her brother. Even in Sir Dean's studied sentences she had discerned an underlying current of alarm. Then there was the message purporting to be from her brother and in his voice. What could that mean? Was it Car who had sent that message, Car himself, or was it part of the mystery? Had some one imitated his voice? But if so—why? What purpose was it to serve? How could any one know of the arrangement to inform Sir Dean of the safety of the papers? How could any one—any outsider—use the private wire of the F. O.?

In an agony of apprehension she sprang up and walked to the door with the intention of getting into some outdoor things so as to be ready in case of emergency. For by now she dreaded she knew not what—the worst—the unknown worst!

But as she touched the door-handle the sudden sharp tinkle of the telephone bell rang out its brusk summons and she flew back to the table in the window in a passion of expectation.

"Yes—yes—are you there? Yes, I am Miss Darien——"

She gripped the receiver and held it to her ears, and as she listened her face grew white as chalk, her body quivered as though a lash descended on the stroke of every sinister word spoken over the wire by an unknown voice.

"You were speaking a moment since to Sir Dean Densham? Quite so. Oh, thanks, I heard everything I wanted to—I tapped the wire at a very opportune moment. You are anxious about your brother, eh? Again quite so. Your brother has been useful to me on the past two or three occasions—oh, quite unintentionally I assure you—and he was useful again to me to-night. But to-night I'm afraid he was just a shade too smart—for his own sake! However, that is beside the mark and concerns only himself and myself. What I rang you up for was to say that if you desire to meet your brother on his return, be at Sir Dean Densham's house in Whitehall at twelve midnight to-night! Understand? Twelve midnight. And you might also acquaint Sir Dean Densham with the fact that I hope to make his acquaintance very soon now—and Mr. Algy Brett also. Can you remember the names? It's not really important—it won't do them any good to know it and it won't do me any harm. Good-by. So sorry you were anxious about your brother. Twelve midnight!"

In a passion of hysteria, of dread, of agonizing doubts, Eva still held the receiver to her ears, begging, shrieking to the unknown sinister voice to explain, to say that Car was safe, to say that Car would be safe!

Until the Exchange called through to ask what number she wanted she poured a prayer of piteous entreaty into the inanimate mouthpiece, straining every nerve to catch even the semblance of an answer.

But none came save the operator's harsh demand, and with a tortured cry of mental anguish she ran blindly from the room to the hall below, calling out as she ran for a servant to call a cab immediately.

Within a minute a taxi swept to the steps and she sprang in, bribing the man with a sovereign to drive his fastest to Sir Dean Densham's, to get her there in ten minutes! To get her there in time! Bribing him again to drive faster—faster—— A madness in her brain made her scream to him again and again to go faster! The clock in St. James' Palace pointed to twenty minutes past eleven and again she urged him to drive faster.

SIR DEAN came to her immediately, his face showing anxiety. He listened without commenting until she had finished. She told him everything—of her fears and of the unknown voice at the telephone.

"And you suspect foul play? You think——?"

"I suspect anything, Sir Dean! I suspect anything and everybody! That voice—that awful voice! It was dreadful—every word a menace!"

Eva Darien sat like a statue of despair in the chair Sir Dean had placed for her. Her fingers twisted and tore her gloves to shreds; her eyes, black with fear, never left Sir Dean's face.

"It is barely half-past eleven—we still have thirty minutes in which to try to find out what it means. I think perhaps some one ought to be stationed in the porch in case your brother does not return alone. The odd thing is why Darien should come here instead of to his own home. Why come to my house at midnight—I mean, why has the man who evidently knows his whereabouts counseled him to come to me? If the man who spoke to you on the telephone is the man who is accountable for your brother's disappearance, then he is also the man whose benefit it was to secure the papers—and I can not think that he would be so ready, so eager to permit Darien to give his account of what has happened! Only six hours have elapsed since the papers left my charge—even the most daring criminal does not deliberately send his scapegoat back to tell his story so early in the game! If you——"

"I think I saw Jacobs and another detective in the hall as I came in?"

Eva's voice was jerky, but Densham could see her mind working clearly and quickly behind the enveloping feverish anxiety.

"Yes, Jacobs and Martin. As a matter of fact, Mr. Sterrith and Lord Vales are here—about the missing papers, and the two men are attending them. The Cabinet have many enemies just now and—— But I will go down and give instructions to the men. Will you wait here?"

"I would rather go with you, Sir Dean. It is almost twelve—oh, let us go!"

Without a second's delay the detectives received their orders and acted on them, stationing themselves within an alcove between the front door and the flight of steps leading down to the street. The lights in the hall were lowered and the massive doors left imperceptibly ajar. Eva moved restlessly in the shadows and Sir Dean never left her side. The hall seemed full of whispering shapes, barely visible in the dimness. The Prime Minister and Lord Vales, impelled by the sudden sense of something un-toward afoot, stepped from the library and stood listening, motionless beside the banks of palms circling the stair-foot.

The sound of the traffic in Whitehall and Parliament Street buzzed dully across the dividing distance; the harsh hoot of a horn echoed like a thunderbolt in the straining ears of those who watched and waited, and close on the heels of the discordant noise the clock of St. Stephen's boomed out majestically—*One . . two . . . . . eleven . . twelve!*

Twelve slow and ponderous notes—a lifetime of agony held between each reluctant stroke.

TWELVE! Ere the resonant vibration had died away a sudden commotion arose beyond the door—a great cry ringing through the night, a cry of horror and dismay, and then the sound of some one running on the asphalt pavement, some one dashing up the steps to the door, taking them three at a time, stumbling on the last.

THE double doors opened wide under the onslaught, and the two detectives and a slim, slight, boyish-looking man literally fell into the hall. Breathless, panting, choking back inarticulate sobs, the newcomer came to a halt opposite Sir Dean. It was Algy Brett, but an Algy so white and shaken with horror of something he had seen that his uncle could scarcely recognize him.

"Algy!" he cried, starting out from the shadowy wall and twisting the boy under the light of the electrolier. "Algy, for God's sake—what?"

Brett tried to control his palsied mouth, but his lips slid from side to side and his tongue refused to form the words. His usually merry eyes were wild with the terror of the thing he had just witnessed. His fingers clawed his uncle as though dreading he should leave him.

Then a voice, clear and strong, ringing with despair, cut through the babble of whispers and questions and there was an insistence in it he obeyed.

"My brother! My brother! You have seen my brother?"

Brett spun round and met Eva's eyes.

"My brother!" she whispered.

Also in a whisper Algy answered her, but he laid his quivering fingers over hers as they rested on his coat and conveyed a sympathy his distorted words could not summon.

"Yes, it's your brother! Poor Darien—out there at the foot of the steps in the road—poor Darien! What a fate, poor lad! It was awful! I was coming along in answer to your message, Uncle Dean—didn't get it till twenty minutes ago—then just as I was crossing the street I heard a funny noise in the air above me—a swishing, slipping noise, and stood still. It was—— Oh, sir, I wish I'd run away as hard as I could! If I'd *only* run then! But I stayed, and the next second something fell through the air and smashed on the stones at my feet—something heavy! I stooped down to look at it—I thought it was a bundle. *It was poor Darien!"*

"Dead!" whispered Eva.

"Stone dead—thank God, stone dead—— That *devil!"*

Sir Dean's ears pricked suddenly. He had caught Brett's muttered ejaculation and in a flash the whole black mystery of that miserable night became clear to him. In an instant he was once again the cool, calm man of affairs and he flung curt orders at the gaping servants; motioned the two detectives and the men-servants who were bringing in the secretary's body on an improvised stretcher to take their burden into the little waiting room to the left of the hall; gave Eva Darien into the housekeeper's charge until she was calmer, and then in a voice of such bitter acidity as made them wonder, called his nephew, the Prime Minister and Lord Vales into the study and shut the door behind him.

"And now," he said in a voice of thunderous anger, "and now we will go through the mill!"

II

EVA escaped at last from the housekeeper's attentions and protestations of sympathetic horror and crept down the stairs till the sound of voices guided her to the room where Sir Dean was closeted with Sterrith and Lord Vales.

A fierce anger against Sir Dean was burning in her breast and she blamed him bitterly for making so inexperienced a youth as Carlile the messenger for such an important despatch. She felt a hatred for him as the man to blame for Car's death. The sound of his voice, raised and slightly shrill, penetrating the door of his library, filled her with an angry, grief-laden sense of wrong. She turned the handle noiselessly and stepped within the room with some intention, vague and undefined, of accusing him, of blaming him.

An immense mahogany screen guarded the room from the door and she stood still, hidden by it, trying to choke down the hysteric anger surging up in her throat.

And then, even as she stood hesitating, a strange feeling came to her. It was as though the room were charged and alive with electricity—as though a mighty pulse beat somewhere within those lofty, book-lined walls—a mighty pulse drowning the throb of hers and of those pigmy men seated at the distant table. She awoke suddenly to the knowledge that not anxiety or regret for her brother's fate was the vital factor—there was that other something, that unknown, tremendous quantity which had been embodied in Sir Dean's voice when he called the Prime Minister and the others into his room without even so much as a glance at the shapeless bundle that had been his private secretary a few hours earlier!

It was a something which she had quite failed to grasp—something which had driven her to futile anger against Sir Dean. And now it seemed to loom up out of the shadowy room and grip her soul. The papers! It was *their* fate that mattered! It was their fate menaced a nation! Their fate meant the fate of an empire! The death of her brother was only a little side issue—a pain felt by only one person!

She stared at Sir Dean's face. It was as though she had never seen him before—it was the face of an old, old man. There were four other men in the room, all seated at the table facing Sir Dean—Sterrith, the Prime Minister; Lord Vales of the Admiralty; Brett, pale and distressed still, but animated by a deep excitement that burned like molten fire in his youthful eyes; Schlesinger, the famous detective for whom Sir Dean must have sent immediately.

Sterrith and Vales were very pale and the same anxiety that lined Sir Dean's face was becoming visible in theirs and deeper as every moment passed. They were men in the grip of a fear, indefinite in a measure and yet so horribly real. They were men in the grip of an evil, and the evil was very plain—it was panic!—*panic!*—PANIC! Even Sir Dean was inclined to be destroyed by it; its influence had marked him unmistakably.

Schlesinger—a tall, narrow-shouldered man with an emaciated, clever face and sunken eyes overhung with thick brows—was leaning over the table, his hands loosely clasped before him, his all but invisible eyes never straying from Sir Dean's haggard face. He was speaking in a soft, monotonous tone that barely penetrated to the recess behind the screen.

"The bald facts are, Sir Dean, that you sent Mr. Darien, unaccompanied, to the Foreign Office with the despatches because you thought it would avert suspicion if there should be suspicion, and because the other and ordinary channels were, in your opinion, being watched and were the most likely to be attacked—if, as I say, an attack was meditated. It has to be taken into account, Sir Dean, that you, and you only, suggest that your late secretary's death is traceable directly to his possession of the papers. Mr. Sterrith here does not, I take it, believe——".

"But he *must* believe it!" interrupted Algy Brett, his voice ringing through the room with vibrating earnestness. "*You* must believe it! If you don't, how are you going to account for the papers? Where are they? Not at the F. O., not on poor Darien's body. You may take it from me, gentlemen, that they are safe in the possession of an old pal of ours! He it is who has waved his magic wand over them! Our old pal, Alsopp Ostermann, whom you, Mr. Schlesinger, are invited to hunt down!

"You look supercilious, Mr. Sterrith, but, if you will cast your mind back, you will remember that you looked supercilious once before over the prowess of Mr. Ostermann! On the occasion—exactly a week since—of the affair of the missing war-ships? You scouted the idea that there was any invention under the sun that the impregnable British fighting forces on land and sea did not possess—except in the imagination of the *Daily Mail!*

"When Sir Dean suggested to you—when he jolly well tried to poke it down your throats—that this man Ostermann was the owner and inventor of a marvelous air-ship, you smiled and smiled, and Lord Vales here smiled, and the whole Admiralty, and the Minister for War was pointed to the miserably few, miserably misunderstood aeroplanes which in flat, calm weather manage to fly a few yards or so over Laffan's Plain and come to earth with a dashed sight more ease than they rise from it!

"To those amateur and speculative toys you proudly pointed and boasted of them as war-ships which would rout any enemy that dared to invade our shores—always provided, I suppose, that they did not dare for the next forty years or so till we were ready for them!"

* * *

"AND in the meantime," continued Sir Dean, some of his old suavity back in his voice as his nephew's thrilling voice awoke an answering throb in his heart. "And in the meantime, Alsopp Ostermann, a man working hand in hand with a foreign Power for the downfall of England, striving night and day to weaken her defenses, is watching with the eyes of a hawk for the moment when the opportunity will arise to throw her at the mercy of the enemy, her strength broken—by his means; —her defenses crippled—by his means; her coast unguarded and her army a panic-stricken mob!

"For the past month Ostermann has been working for this—he and his masters across the water! You, as Prime Minister of England, Mr. Sterrith, should have known this; you as the First Sea Lord, Lord Vales, should have known it—twice I have told you my suspicions and twice you refused to be warned. Even now, now at this very moment, with those despatches in his possession, with the knowledge they contained at his disposal, with the knowledge, gentlemen, that we have fallen one over the other and without a single protest into his trap—hear me out if you please, gentlemen—with, as I say, the knowledge that we have swallowed the bait and that for at least twelve hours almost the entire east coast is unprotected, unprepared, you still refuse to believe! You won't take a warning, eh? Yes, a trap, I say, a trap! And you fools have insisted upon us walking into it!"

His voice rose almost to a shout. He threw calmness to the winds—he threw etiquette to the winds; he cared naught for it. The sight of John Sterrith's smug face —startled now at his vehemence and twitching with nervousness—filled him with rage. At all costs he must rouse them! At all costs, or England—London—would be conquered within a night by an enemy who perhaps even now were steaming full speed across the channel!

John Sterrith had risen to his feet. His face was drawn and pallid and he looked like a man with his back to the wall, suddenly awake to the reality that he must fight.

"A trap?" he asked thickly. "What trap?"

His stupid eyes stared into Densham's snapping gray ones. "What trap?" he repeated.

Densham minced no words. He was a wild beast roused. He spat out the answer like shrapnel:

"By whose orders were the Atlantic fleet cruisers and the Nore torpedo-destroyer flotilla sent to sea? By whose orders was the Atlantic battleship squadron sent on a wild goose chase to the Hebrides? By whose orders was the east coast denuded of a single man-of-war worth putting into action? By whose orders I say?"

Vales stiffened himself into a semblance of dignified authority.

"The orders were sent through in code from Admiral Lord Fredom—he conferred with me on the advisability of preparing for sudden attack and we arranged that an imaginary enemy was trying to land forces——"

"And as it happens you prophesied rightly! They *are* trying to land forces! Ostermann is a clever rogue!"

"Ostermann?"

"Ostermann. Codes can be stolen—or perhaps you didn't guess that? Who but Ostermann sent those orders to the fleets? Who but Ostermann spoke to me from the Foreign Office and gained a clear five hours by making me believe Darien had got the despatches through safely?"

Sterrith ran his finger between his neck and collar as though choking.

"My God!" he said breathlessly. "My God!"

"The despatches," continued Sir Dean, his voice icy with ill-suppressed anger, "the despatches were the germs of the terms of a private treaty with—you know with whom, gentlemen. A private treaty, which, seen as it stands, is so hostile that even a weaker country than Ostermann's, a far more peaceable one, would be justified in declaring war upon us! To provide themselves with the civilized orthodoxy of an excuse Ostermann planned and succeeded in waylaying the messenger who was taking them to Follett for consideration. With those papers in their possession no Power will blame them for their attack when they publish the facts. I can not blame them myself. They have been waiting and waiting and preparing for this opportunity, and it is childish to quarrel with them for being clever enough to foresee it and seize upon it! And in the background—always in the background—is Alsopp Ostermann!"

"But we ought to do something! What can we do?" Sterrith asked the question of every one and any one. His nerves were on fire and the thought that England would hold him largely responsible crushed him. "What can we do?" he insisted, appealing to each one of them, little red shoots tingeing his pale, shifty eyes, his nervous fingers playing with his high collar.

"There's nothing to be done further than I have done—just yet. I have sent instructions broadcast. Every ship has received orders. There is nothing to do but to sit still and wait."

A LITTLE silence fell upon the room and each man was busy with his thoughts. And in that silence, noiselessly, like a phantom figure, Eva Darien walked slowly up the room from behind the screen. Not until she was within the yellow circle of light thrown down from the hanging lamp above the table did any one speak, and then Algy Brett leaped to his feet and crossed over to her.

"Miss Darien," he said quickly, anxiety in his voice as he looked into the ashen face. "Surely you ought to have rested——"

She interrupted him with a little gesture. And then, continuing her way across the yellow patch, she walked up to Sir Dean.

"I think I have a message for you from my brother," she said simply.

Every man was standing and every man's eyes were on her face. She looked like a woman in a trance, her deep eyes burning blackly in the pale setting of her face, the only sign of consciousness.

"A message——" Sir Dean's voice was almost a whisper, and a wave of compassion passed over his face as he looked down at her. The thought flashed into his mind that the sudden tragedy had upset her brain. He tried to say something, but his tongue formed only the words "A message?"

She looked at him steadily. Not an emotion stirred from the frozen chill of her face—only those haunting eyes, blazing with something which he could not read as sorrow, met his and told of life.

"Yes, a message. Just now they permitted me to see him. I kissed his hand—they would not let me see his face—I kissed his hand and as I pressed my lips to it it opened slowly as though drawing my attention to that which lay within! I think it is a message meant for you—I think it is!"

Her voice weakened; she took a step nearer the table and laid upon it a paper—crushed and creased and red in places.

Sir Dean picked it up and read it through. Then read it through again and then again.

> I am a prisoner in Alsopp Ostermann's air-ship. I can remember seeing him walk toward me as I was halfway down the terrace, then nothing more. I suppose they drugged me. I am supposed to be still insensible, but I have been conscious for the last hour. They have flung me into a lazarette between two steel walls—such a narrow space that makes it agony to breathe and a worse agony to write this message, but I must try and let some one know. The drug still fogs me, yet I can hear them talking quite plainly and clearly in the cabin beyond the inner wall of steel plates—the rivets of the plates are sinking deeper and deeper every moment into my flesh, so tightly am I wedged.
>
> Whoever finds me, take this paper to Sir Dean Densham in Whitehall. To him the following—Break the news of my fate to my sister. Look in the lower left drawer of your ebony desk and there find the despatches and papers which by this time you will believe to be stolen and in the hands of the enemy. But I had observed strangers following me the last day or so, and as a test I carried faked despatches with me this afternoon.
>
> Ostermann's anger is maniac at the deception; I can hear him raving and wrangling and shouting orders. They are going to murder me—to throw me overboard. It's horrible, the helplessness of waiting for them to come for me!
>
> They have wireless on board and the operator has been working it for the last hour. Once I heard Ostermann say "Call up the fleet and tell them——" the rest of it was lost. Then another order: "Strew London with the Seeds of Destruction. Strew them broadcast over England! Sow them on every ship they possess! Seeds of Destruction! Seeds of Death! A sower of the name of Ostermann! A reaper of the name of *Gray Ghost*, who will sound the last trump!"
>
> He is laughing now—horrible laughter—and I can hear him emptying bags on the table—bags of something that rattle and roll like quantities of bullets and yet have the sound of stones being heaped together. I'd give the world to be able to see through this impenetrable steel, to warn you more clearly!
>
> I think they are coming for me now—the ship is dropping and shooting to earth. Eva, my last thought——

"He saved the papers, thank God! He saved the papers!" Sir Dean muttered and passed the blood-stained page, torn from a pocket-book, across the table to Schlesinger.

Schlesinger read it once and handed it

to Algy Brett, who was next to him, with the brief comment, "Bombs, I suppose!"

Algy read the posthumous message with his brain working rapidly and ever circling round the one man—Ostermann. Ostermann had been balked of the papers he had kidnapped Darien to get hold of. Ostermann had ordered the wholesale "sowing" of "Seeds of Destruction" in revenge, besides the brutal murder of Densham's secretary. What did he mean by "Seeds of Destruction?" Bombs? Schlesinger thought so. Bombs! Could it be? Were his allies from across the Channel already steaming toward England with the pennant of war flying in defiant triumph, or had the loss of the despatches delayed them? Were the "Seeds of Destruction" purely and solely a holocaustic revenge on Ostermann's part and entirely independent of the threatened invasion? Bombs? Bombs? But if they were bombs something would have happened before this! London could have been wrecked in the time which must have elapsed between the writing of the blood-stained little note and now. Now it was almost one o'clock. An hour after that fatal midnight! An hour since St. Stephen's had boomed out Carlile Darien's death-signal! In an hour something would have happened? And yet that warning, written by a hand that was barely cold in death! It was impossible to disregard it!

And then, in a flash, light came to him. It was as though a voice breathed in his ear—the chill, wraith's voice of the murdered Darien!

He flung round in a frenzy of excitement, the blood flaming in his face, his eyes snapping.

"The late edition of the *Westminster Gazette?*" he cried eagerly. "I saw Edmonds hand it to you, uncle."

He searched among the papers on the desk and found it. It was a midnight edition on the Parliamentary crisis. He turned in awkward haste to the stop-press news and read a short three-line sentence out loud.

> A van-driver was killed late this evening in Fleet Street by a meteorite. It struck him with such great force that it was found imbedded in his brain on arrival at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Brett flung the paper down before Schlesinger.

"A meteorite?" he said, his voice shrill with meaning. "A meteorite, or a 'Seed of Destruction?' Which?"

III

THE dawn found Algy Brett returning from a laborious, systematic search which had resulted in his possessing three peculiarly round, peculiarly similar, dead-white, lead-heavy stones. One he had picked up in an area of the new War Office buildings, one in the yard of St. Paul's Cathedral, and one he had been permitted to secure from St. Bartholomew's, spotted red with its victim's blood.

He took them straight to Schlesinger.

Schlesinger looked at them almost carelessly and tossed them on to a side table.

"Bombs—deadly bombs!" he said shortly. "Bombs, but devilishly ingenious! That little lot of three must alone have cost a pretty big sum, and the man who is responsible for their being where you found them must either be a lunatic or an enemy more than ordinarily vindictive and cruel."

Brett received the big detective's verdict without moving a muscle. That the evilly pallid things were bombs of some sort or other he had guessed—it would be absolute foolishness to attempt to think otherwise—and he also realized that, whatever their ultimate purpose, at present they were harmless. So he watched Schlesinger toss them on the side-table with the composure of a war veteran.

"We guessed that at one o'clock this morning!" he said coolly. "We only wanted to authenticate Darien's message that they were sowing what they facetiously called *seeds!* What I now want to know is what will send them off? That they are intended to go off at a certain time is obvious—but when! That's the mighty question? *When?* And another mighty question is, *How?* It's a certainty that Ostermann, when he has finished 'placing' the beastly things, isn't going to spend some more time hunting 'em up and setting 'em off! That isn't likely, is it? Especially if there's a daisy little fleet of men-of-war twiddling their thumbs outside there waiting for London to be blown to eternity so they can then rush in and sing 'We're King of the Castle' at long, long last?"

"I should say it was not at all likely, Mr. Brett. The things will go off by themselves in due course."

"And we can do nothing but sit still and twiddle our thumbs till they do?"

"We can do something, certainly—we have done already a great deal. Sir Dean has made the communication wires in every inch of England red-hot with instructions; secret agents have almost worn a path from Whitehall to all the arsenals, barracks, depots, telephone exchanges; the coasts are alive with moving gun-barrels; the water is black with scouting destroyers; every ship is cleared for action! Sir Dean is a wonderful old fellow. You ought to be proud of being his nephew. According to him he's a little proud of you, eh? I heard of your adventure of the stolen battleships and the Liverpool affair. Good lad! I wish you belonged to me."

"It would be exciting, wouldn't it? But tell me more. Tell me in what numbers do you think they have sown these things? I searched the War Office from ceiling to cellar—we all did—and we found nothing but that one white stone, and that was outside the building. Do you think they'd be satisfied with one?"

"One would be more than sufficient to make hay of Whitehall itself, let alone the War Office! Staking everything to the unit system, I think we have London anyway almost freed from the menace. My men have been busy. They have swarmed over the face of the map like bees. And they've collected a most satisfactory amount of honey!"

"Phew! That's good news, isn't it?" exclaimed Algy, his face lighting up.

"Very good," assented the detective, smiling at the other's enthusiasm. "But it would be more satisfactory if we could collect Ostermann. For two reasons I want him!"

"It's easier to put salt on a bird's tail than to try and catch Ostermann. What are the two reasons?"

"First, he may set to work any moment the power which is to explode his 'Seeds of Destruction.' Secondly, we do not know that he has sown them all!"

"If I could only discover the secret—the unholy secret of those anemic pebbles! If we knew that——"

"Even then we would not be much better off than we are now. It's that man Ostermann, the master hand! Ostermann, who, by a finger pressed upon a tiny button, can gain the power to slaughter us all!"

BRETT sprang up from his chair and leaned over Schlesinger, peering into his clever, emaciated face with eyes ablaze.

"You know? You've solved the riddle? You know the secret of the bombs? Lord, here have I been chewing my nails trying to puzzle it out and you've known it all the time! Tell me!"

The detective, famous in two continents, known the world over, reverenced by his satellites, consulted by every crowned head in Europe, the Czar's personal friend, stood up suddenly before Algy Brett and bade him look at him.

He was more than ordinarily tall, emaciated to a point verging on a skeleton, with narrow shoulders shrugged up to his ears, a mass of stringy hair strikingly white and lifeless, a pair of brilliant eyes deeply sunk. Above them protruded a pair of bushy brows whose inky blackness was almost grotesque in harsh comparison with his ashen hair and colorless face, seered and lined and pitted as though a lingering, unconquerable disease devoured and fed it.

"Look at me!" he commanded. "In me—in the wreck of a fine man you see—a martyr to science! Years ago my name was beginning to be whispered abroad as a scientist. I intended to make it a name to conjure with. Perhaps, after all, I have succeeded in that aim, though not in the career I loved best in the world. Perhaps—who knows?—I have done better work in this sphere than I might have done in that other. But to continue.

"One of the mysteries I attacked day and night was the mystery of why some operators of what is known as the X-rays should have become attacked by a virulent, incurable disease—why its most persistent disciples should, almost without exception, be stricken by the deadly malady. I failed to succeed. I fell a victim myself and was ill for years—for so many years that my place was filled; striplings had raced ahead of me; I was a forgotten quantity.

"There was nothing for it but to turn my attention to the profession I loved next after science. I became what you know me to be to-day, but I dabbled still, and one day, not a great many since, I stumbled across the secret which had baffled me so long, which had baffled the whole company of medical men for so long. *I discovered the poisonous fang!*

"I discovered one solitary, isolated, single ray—a ray so deadly in its undreamed of power, so malignant, so tremendous in its consequences when used alone that it will make the whole world sick with horrified wonder and dismay when the knowledge is given to it! A thin, pale purple ray—in reality a flaming sword—the swiftest messenger of death ever sent from heaven or hell or from the cankered mind of him who also has discovered it! He who has known of it, improved on it, welded it to his colossal purpose, sold it to his allies for thirty pieces of silver!

"This is Ostermann's secret! This is how he will destroy England—how he hopes to pave the way for that attacking army which may even now be awaiting the signal to empty its numbers into London and seize a victory on the heels of panic! First he sows the seeds, and as the sun in the heavens shines down and brings to life the seeds we sow, so Ostermann, flashing like a meteor through the skies, will with his purple ray shine on the seeds *he* has scattered broadcast upon the earth, and each of those curiously shaped, curiously innocent-looking little white stones there will burst forth and shoot out tongues of fire! Ingenious, isn't it?"

Algy licked his lips. They were burning and parched as though a fever gripped him. Perhaps it did—the fever of an almost insane and helpless anger against Alsopp Ostermann.

"Ingenious!" he cried bitterly, his eyes wet. "Ingenious! The Man of Hell himself couldn't have invented anything more monstrous—or used it worse! Ostermann! We're helpless! We're in Ostermann's power!"

"We've done the one and only thing we could have done without capturing the man himself. Thanks to poor Darien we've been able to do something!"

"YOU mean reaping his harvest? Or at least reaping a patch or two of it?" cried Brett with a cackle of laughter shaking his voice.

"We've reaped most of it, I hope," said Schlesinger slowly. "Those bombs must have taken days and days to fashion and cost thousands of pounds each. It is not likely on the face of it that our enemies—no matter how rich and envious and ambitious—would supply Ostermann with a larger quantity than necessary. I am relying on the theory that Ostermann does not allow for any possible hitch occurring. He has sown every 'Seed of Destruction' he had aboard his air-ship and, for a space at least, we are safe."

"The toss-up is whether he has any emergency store of them somewhere handy to fall back on."

"Not in England!" said Schlesinger grimly.

"Why not?"

"The ray would explode the emergency store at the same time it was blowing up the others! I doubt whether he'd even risk keeping one aboard his air-ship while he was working the ray apparatus! Thanks to that poor fellow Darien, I think we have him hip and thigh over this little job, eh?"

Schlesinger clasped his thin fingers and a flame of triumphal pride shot from his hidden eyes.

"Thanks also to your wonderful brain, Schlesinger!" cried Algy, grasping the folded hands and pressing them with boyish gratitude and hero-worship. "If you hadn't figured what those beastly little pebbles meant and had delayed sending out every bobby in London—and every village out of it where they possess a bobby—to hunt all out, we'd have been preparing to die at any moment! They ought to let you loose in the Mint for this, with a couple of sacks!"

"We're not out of the wood yet, sonny!" said the detective, smiling. "We can not be certain that we have even picked up half——"

Even as he spoke the ground beneath them quivered, a dull roar filled the little room with thunder, a horrible, sickening sound of tremendous explosion shook the world, and for a long, long, unending century that was but a minute of time it was as though the universe had fallen and were crashing about their ears.

Stunned and pale they clung to each other—the man and the boy—fearful and shaking. Then they dashed to the window and tore the blind aside.

Peering out, they saw the eastern sky just cutting a thread of opal-tinted pink, foretelling dawn.

Upon the river below, the wharfs were tinging slowly with the reflection of the thread, and beyond the river, hovering like a fog-clogged cloud, shapeless and distant, gray and menacing, something sailed rapidly through the clearing air!

Algy leaned heavily against Schlesinger, craning his neck round the dividing middle frame of the narrow window.

He pointed to it, his breath catching as though sobs choked him, his eyes flecked with the funny little streaks of red which had shot through them when he fled from the secretary's broken body as it lay at his feet in the street.

"*Gray Ghost!*" he whispered pointing. "*Gray Ghost!*"

"And the Ray!" assented Schlesinger.

Yes, and the Ray! It was falling from the air-ship like a stream of molten lead—thin, purple in color, unwavering. At times it also reflected the radiant rose color of the coming dawn and became a flaming sword—the sword of battle and murder and death, tinged and streaked with crimson blood!

And to meet it, as though welcoming its coming, the earth shot into red and yellow flames, licking the purple ray and staining the dawn with smoke-grimed fingers.

"Woolwich Arsenal!" cried Schlesinger, a bitter chagrin eating into his voice, "Woolwich! Those fools!"

Ostermann had drawn first blood.

IV

AN HOUR passed—an hour of agony and anxiety. London had poured out into the streets—a jostling, fighting swarm of terrified creatures who had taken the terrific explosion of Woolwich Arsenal to be the sign and signal that the end of the world was approaching. They marched down Whitehall, armies of them, ragged and rich, singing hymns and offering up delirious prayers to the heavens which were red and menacing with the glare of burning Woolwich. They massed together in side streets, afraid to go back to their homes, refusing to believe that all danger was at an end.

And as though to determine them in their obstinacy a second shock, though less violent than the first, shattered the stillness and made the earth heave and rumble beneath their flying feet! Once more the Ray had done its work. This time it was farther away—somewhere toward the mouth of the river. And then, in quick succession, a third explosion followed hard on the heels of the second, and again the lurid glow lighted up the sky!

Schlesinger turned to Brett.

"Probably Gravesend—and Sheerness. The last one was a considerable distance off. Probably the unit system has failed to work! Though I am thankful to say I did not rely absolutely upon it, especially in places of naval or military importance! But all the same, even three is more than I hoped he would get!"

Algy turned round from the window. In the last hour he had not moved an inch away from it. But at the last explosion the mob had scurried away like frightened rabbits and the street was almost clear again. He pointed it out to the detective.

"It's fairly clear now. Shall I run over and see Uncle Dean? He asked me to slip across as soon as I could with safety."

"Yes, do. I'll just get through to him again and tell him you're going. I will follow you, perhaps, but at present I must stay here and take the messages as they come in."

THE look of age had deepened on Sir Dean's face. It was the face of a man who had lived a troubled century in the hours that had gone. He turned to his nephew with a flash of relief lighting up the gloom of his eyes.

"Well, boy, any more news? I'm very glad to have you here. I'm very lonely."

"Has Miss Darien gone?"

"Yes. Vales took her home. Tell me what Schlesinger thinks. Algy, it's driving me mad to realize that I must sit here and wait, wait, while that fiend up there does his evil work at will! Three victories for him in London and four from the country! Thank God, our ships are safe and are searching the Channel—scouring the North Sea for the enemy. Though I expect that, as things have not turned out quite as they planned, they have gone back to port to await further advice from Ostermann."

"Thanks to Schlesinger, this night's work must be as gall and wormwood in Ostermann's mouth! And I'd give all I possess in this world if we could only see him tasting the bitterness of his failure!"

"I would give the rest of my life itself to be able to rid England of such an enemy! If I could only *do* something! It's this awful state of helplessness that's driving me mad! If we could *do* something!"

"Still, the list isn't a quarter as bad as it might have been, sir. Only seven. Woolwich, Shorncliffe, Aldershot, a Tyneside yard, and unauthenticated reports from Dover and Sheerness and Gravesend! A severe bucketing, but nothing like it might have been! Think of the carnage if Schlesinger had not acted within five minutes of leaving here!"

"A worse bucketing! Aye! And we must swallow it without a murmur because we can do nothing! We have no proof! We have a man like John Sterrith at our head—frightened, intent on keeping his ministerial fingers clean, starving England on his peace-at-all-costs policy! Peace, forsooth, because he is afraid of the sound of shots!"

"Well, he's got some in advance and unasked for this time. Perhaps it will wake him up. If he had only sanctioned that loan to Hafner and myself we might have had the nucleus of a fine fleet of aerial men-of-war now and could have gone out on the stroke of twelve and fought Ostermann on his own level! Even if I could have managed *Star of the Sea* I would have at least tried to wing that monster bird of prey, but since Hafner has disappeared the engine has broken down and no one seems able to understand the stupid thing. If only Hafner——"

"Hafner? What has become of him? Disappeared?"

"Yes, immediately we landed after the stolen battleship affair. I had prophesied that his share of the deal would be enough to keep him for the rest of his life and that he could at least enjoy himself building air-ship models. I even suggested to him that the Government might be able to see wisdom in a year or so and that then his fortune would be made. But he didn't care for anything I said. He seemed dazed.

"I think that the excitement of being so close to his hated enemy, being, as it were, within an inch of victory and the consummation of his long-cherished revenge, and then for Ostermann to escape him in the last was too much for his brain. Anyway, he escaped me and, though I have searched everywhere for him, I can't find him. I suppose he'll turn up again some day.

"There's one thing that makes me think so and that is he gave me his word of honor that if he possibly could he'd let me in at the death! And if I know anything of Hafner he's the kind of beggar to glory in the fact of there being witnesses to his final, gloating triumph! Oh, Hafner will turn up again, I've no doubt, but I wish he'd have done it before this!"

The words were scarcely out of Brett's mouth when the telephone-bell rang sharply at his elbow and, with a nod of assent from Sir Dean, he took off the receiver and listened.

A raucous voice, stifled and barely intelligible, came through, and at the sound of it Algy's face flushed up with sudden excitement and he uttered a name for his uncle's benefit, motioning him to take up the second receiver.

Hafner! It was Hafner's voice! Hafner trying passionately to control his words and failing! They came tumbling and racing through the telephone, tripping one another up, stumbling one upon the other, somewhat incoherent, sometimes utterly incomprehensible, but always thrilling with a fervid excitement and a fierce, unholy joy.

"I've got him! I've got him! I have watched all night and wondered what his game was! Then when Woolwich Arsenal blew up I knew! I watched him still, 'im and 'is purple searchlight, watched him circling and darting away up and out of sight! Then coming back slowly down like a bird, down, down, close as 'e dared to the earth, as though searching for summat he couldn't find. Sometimes he'd go off for a long time and then swoop back again an' search again with his purple light. An' then it 'appened. *Something went wrong with 'Gray Ghost'!* I could hear her groaning as she flew—it looked as though she was coming straight in my direction, and flying low and listing badly and one of 'er wings drooping! She's maimed and broken for the first time in 'er life—a bad break, and Ostermann is in my power——"

The raucous voice died away in a wild sob and Brett shouted wildly for him to go on—to go on—that every minute was precious—every second meant a chance for Ostermann!

"Where are you speaking from, Hafner? Where are we to find you?" he yelled, forgetting everything in his wild excitement. "Where are you, and where is Ostermann?"

Hafner laughed like a madman at the other end of the wire and they could hear him gurgling, delirious with the frenzy of his sudden opportunity.

"Where are you?" demanded Algy for the third time, a fierce impatience shaking him. "If you won't tell us we will have to set the Yard on to find him, and the moment we do that he will know! And he's not the man to sit still and wait for them to run him down, is he? Look here, Hafner, if you don't work with us you'll let him slip through your fingers! Where are you?"

"In a call-office in Wapping. I've been doin' a bit of work down 'ere and livin' in a garret of a house. The garret has a door on to the roof and I was up there when I caught sight of *Gray Ghost.* Ostermann and *Gray Ghost* disappeared somewhere on the river banks. I'm going out now to find out where. I'm goin' to 'unt him down, and if I meet him face to face——!"

"Tell me where you are! Give me your address, you idiot, or tell me where I can meet you! You can't hunt that man down alone! Wait for me to come along with you. Will you? Why not? You promised me I should be in at the end! I promise you I won't try and stop your taking your revenge—you can tear his heart out and jump on it if you like—only let me be there, too! Will you?"

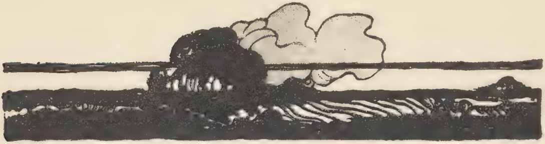
They listened to him growling and grumbling and grunting at the other end and waited anxiously for the decision he was struggling to. And then at last it came — reluctant and ungracious, but a consent.

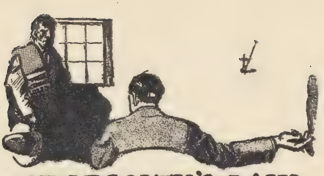
"Well, yer can come when I've found 'im —not before that, mind yer, though! I won't 'ave yer nosing around and giving 'im the straight tip to clear out! And if yer won't try and tell me murder ain't nice and the sight not pretty enough to suit yer! Yer can come if yer'll promise me yer'll wait till I tell yer to come—oh, no fear of that, I'll give yer time and plenty! You go to yer bed and sleep till I want yer—that'll be time enough for you. Aw, I'll find him! He can't 'ave gone far. He was winged too bad, he was! Now give me yer word you won't come hunting round with a lot of 'tects till I tell yer I'm ready. Thank yer. I'll 'old yer to that, mind!"

He rang off without a word of warning, and Brett hung up his receiver with an air of bitter disappointment.

"More delays!" he said pettishly, flinging himself back in his chair. "I am sick of them all! Hafner is an ungrateful turncoat. I thought we'd got Ostermann at last! I thought we'd got him at last!"

"And perhaps we have," said Sir Dean slowly. "Perhaps we have. At least we are sure of one thing—*Gray Ghost* is disabled and out of the battle for a few hours, and without *Gray Ghost* Ostermann is powerless! For a few hours, then, we are safe. Although we can do nothing, for a few hours we are safe! Thank a merciful God—safe! And now ring through and tell Schlesinger I command him to go to bed!"





NECESSITY'S LAW IN PARADISE

by STELLA BURKE MAY

"IF YOU, señor, had a seester you love, an' ever' day her man she marry beat her—ever' day he beat her till the blood come, what do you, señor?"

Mazaro Gonzales kicked the "Compiled Laws of New Mexico" that held open the door of the hot, dingy office, and crushed a greasy sombrero with his dirty hands as he doggedly waited for "Big Bill" King to answer.

"Do you know what I'd do, Mazaro?" Big Bill replied without a moment's hesitation. "I would take just about fifteen minutes to give that brother-in-law a whirlwind finish, and I'd do it with about two-bits' worth of buckshot and the first piece of ordnance I could lay my hands on!"

"Me *no comprendo*," grunted Mazaro, knitting his bronzed brows and peering through his pen-slit eyes at the big, handsome American who sat, tilted back in a common kitchen chair, his feet crossed on top of a weather-beaten desk.

"I mean, Mazaro," and King stopped puffing the big black cigar and faced the Mexican, "that I'd shoot him dead full of buckshot, and I'd do it quick!"

"*Bueno, amigo*," was the "Greaser's" only comment as he shuffled out of the door, and Big Bill King returned to the business which Mazaro's timid knock had interrupted. The particular business in hand and, in fact, about the only business in which William Gordon King had engaged since his arrival in Paradise six months previously, was cursing the stars that had guided him to this forlorn town whose biggest attraction was its burying-ground and whose chiefest enterprises were loafing in the daytime and enlarging the cemetery by night.

For, by one of the jokes of fate, William Gordon King, the many-sided, was doing time in Paradise, in the heart of the desert country, with the office of County Attorney serving as the shackle.

As a matter of history, it was no star at all that guided him to Paradise, but the greasy finger of Mazaro Gonzales, whose acquaintance he had made a year previous when both were shifting railroad-ties on the new line of road entering Paradise. Shifting railroad-ties was not King's regular profession; neither was county-attorneying.

His original intention and overwhelming ambition when he journeyed West and climbed the mountains was to gouge out the heart of the Taos Range and become a great copper king, but as months rolled by and the only copper he found within reach was the few pieces stamped with Indian heads which he retained of his original capital, he turned to the only paying profession he could find, and it brought him side by side with Mazaro on the new railroad grade.

When the season's work was over and Mazaro said, "Go my town, Paradise," he accepted the suggestion, and before the end of six months "Bill King" found himself bearing up as best he could under the title of County Attorney and sitting day after day in his office in a one-story adobe building with an equipment of a half-dozen law books inherited from a suddenly deceased predecessor. The law books, be it understood, contained all the knowledge of law the office of County Attorney now held. It was not necessary to know law to be elected County Attorney in Paradise.

When the good citizens of Paradise had first suggested the office to William Gordon King, he hesitated for a moment, but only for a moment. During that moment of hesitation a vision of the railroad grade arose before his eyes and the next he was nominated for County Attorney. He argued with himself that, granting he had no knowledge of law, neither had he possessed any knowledge of mining or railroads, and if in the few months he had been in their midst, the inhabitants of Paradise had seen in him the making of a legal light, far be it from him to depreciate himself. The previous occupations of miner and day-laborer were unknown to his supporters in Paradise, with the exception of Mazaro. Mazaro kept his own counsel and Big Bill did the same.

At the hour of Mazaro's visit, Bill King had occupied the office of County Attorney for just two weeks, that is, he had held possession of the office. There had been no duties to perform, so it was not the obligations of office that caused him to curse his stars. It was not the position of County Attorney. It was not even Mazaro, who had guided him thither. It was Paradise, just Paradise—the most desolate spot in all this barren country. And in this dreary desert with its sacrilegious name, he had sworn to stalk for one year as a mighty limb of the law.

THE sound of the church-bell announced the Angelus hour and, kicking his cigar-stubs into a corner, the County Attorney of Paradise started home to his evening meal at the ranch of Pedro Espejo.

There was small companionship between the Easterner and Pedro, the ranch-owner, or his wife, and "Señor" King ate his supper and drank his vile, black coffee in silence.

Paradise weighed heavily upon him to-night and wrapped him in a gloom too dense for the wreaths of smoke from his big black cigar to penetrate. Not even the remembrance of Mazaro Gonzales' visit or Mazaro Gonzales' family troubles could seep through the pall of his own self-absorption, until some remark of Espejo's wife, spoken in Spanish to her husband, in which she mentioned the name of Bonita, brought him out of his pit of despair, for Bonita was the name of Mazaro's sister.

"I wonder if Francisco does beat up his wife," he mused. "Funny that Mazaro should have made that call on me this afternoon. Maybe he wanted the benefit of my legal knowledge," and he almost smiled. "Maybe—Great Heavens!" and his breath stopped as the seriousness of the situation dawned upon him. Had Mazaro come to him for legal advice? Was the story of the brother-in-law, told in the brief words of this Greaser, his ignorant way of consulting an attorney?

An overwhelming terror seized Big Bill King, who had never known fear in his life. The more he thought, the greater grew his fear. He had known Mazaro as a quiet, peaceable fellow who lived alone in his little adobe shack and seldom spoke of himself or his affairs. Once or twice he had spoken of Bonita to Bill King when the day's work was over on the railroad grade, and always in a bluntly tender way, but never until to-day had he mentioned the fact of her domestic infelicity.

So scant was the County Attorney's acquaintance with methods of jurisprudence that he had given freely of his advice to Mazaro, never dreaming that anything more than a hypothetical case was being presented. He had spoken to a friend, not a client.

As the evening wore on he became more and more oppressed with the thought, and finally determined to ease his conscience by going to Mazaro's 'dobe and talking the matter over.

Once outside the ranchhouse, he felt better and breathed deeply of the still night air. However much the Greasers might be sticking knives between one another's fifth and sixth ribs within their cabins, the night without was quiet as the near-by graveyard, and the only sound was the howl of the *lobos*, or big wolves, that came from the distant hills.

King walked quickly along the white, dusty road, watching the shifting patterns traced on the path as the moonlight slanted through the scattering mesquite.

As he neared the church he heard the tolling of a bell and, rounding a corner, he heard a wailing, moaning sound. A coffin was being borne by six bare-headed men. Behind it trailed a dozen or more women, each with a black shawl over her head and each vying with the other in an effort to make the loudest noise as they passed into the church where the wail changed to the most dismal chant imaginable.

In his present state of mind, this wailing of women and the chanting of the funeral service added tenfold to his already depressed spirits as he quickened his steps toward the home of Mazaro, across the plaza.

Approaching the little wooden bridge, across the arroyo, he heard the sound of hoof-beats. *Clackety-clack, clackety-clack*—nearer and nearer came the pounding of the horse's hoofs.

King stepped aside to give the rider the right of way. As the horse dashed past, Big Bill King's heart stood still, for as the moonlight fell upon the rider, the legal light of Paradise saw Francisco, the brother-in-law of Mazaro, clinging to the broncho's neck with his left arm, while his right hung limp and lifeless, and blood streamed from his face and head. King opened his mouth to shout to the broncho to stop, but choked the cry in his throat when the sound of another horse's hoofs was borne to him across the arroyo. A second time he stood aside, this time in abject terror, and as he crouched down beside the chaparral he recognized the form of the Deputy-Sheriff in mad haste, pursuing the pony which bore the perhaps dead body of Bonita's husband.

A thousand thoughts crowded into King's brain, but uppermost of all were the words he had said to Mazaro a few hours before: "I would shoot him dead with buckshot!"

Imperfect as was his knowledge of law, he knew enough about procedure in Paradise to hazard a bet that the Deputy-Sheriff would arrest Mazaro without the formality of a complaint. From what he gathered of the conversation at Espejo's ranch, the matter of Bonita's family difficulties was a known quantity in Paradise; and Big Bill knew that a little technicality like the County Attorney's signature on a warrant for arrest would never bother a peace officer in Paradise.

"Well," he soliloquized, as he turned his steps toward Pedro's ranch, "I guess I'm in for it, but I'd better keep out of the way until the brick falls."

BIG BILL slept little that night. He had more on his conscience than he had ever had in all his life, and his conscience had borne some burdens, too, for as he once remarked, "he had committed about all the crimes in the calendar, except suicide."

There was something altogether disconcerting in the thought that the first duty performed in the capacity of County Attorney was to advise a Greaser to murder his brother-in-law, and the further thought that the next duty would be to prosecute his first client.

Of course Mazaro was arrested. It didn't take Deputy-Sheriff Hawkins long to trace the criminal. Mazaro had admitted and, in fact, had boasted in the Five Fingers Saloon that afternoon that he intended to shoot Francisco dead, but, from all he could learn of the conversation, King could not find that Mazaro had implicated the new County Attorney in any way.

Before morning Deputy-Sheriff Hawkins had rounded up Mazaro and had him locked in one of the kennel-like cells that look out upon the dirty courtyard called a jail in Paradise.

Mazaro offered no resistance. With dog-like silence he submitted to the law, never for a moment making any attempt to vindicate himself. What was going on behind those dull, half-shut eyes, the County Attorney could not guess. Moreover, there was enough going on in the County Attorney's own mind to keep him pretty busy.

For, while Mazaro slept in his dirty cell, there was little sleep for the County Attorney. Day after day and night after night he spent in his office in the quaint little one-story building, poring over the few law books the den afforded. "Money's Digest" and the "New Mexico Reports" were thumb-marked from beginning to end in the hope of finding some authority justifying such a crime as Mazaro's. Instead of prosecutor he became attorney for the defense as he turned page after page, uttering maledictions upon the heads of all his predecessors who had left him so small a library. Even the copy of "Compiled Laws of New Mexico" was gathered up from the floor where it had served as door-prop, but, like the others, it failed to throw any light on the question.

In desperation he dug an abandoned volume of "Chitty on Criminal Law" from a dusty drawer of the desk and removed from its supporting place under the back leg of the table "Bishop's Criminal Procedure" and fell upon them with feverish anxiety. After hours and hours of pawing through "assault with felonious intent" to "premeditated murder," he heaved a sigh of relief as he came across "justifiable homicide." "Justifiable homicide," he read, "in an effort to prevent bodily harm to parent, child, brother, sister——" There! He had them! Sister—"in an effort to prevent bodily harm to sister!"

For five seconds he breathed easier, but, as he read on, came the fact of the premeditation; the boasting of Mazaro in the Five Fingers Saloon. As for Mazaro's visit to him, that was known to only the County Attorney and Mazaro, and unless the Greaser admitted it in testimony, the County Attorney resolved that it should be forever a buried secret. Nevertheless, the fact remained that Mazaro had boasted that he intended to kill Francisco, and no amount of law reading could wipe out the fact that kept coming back to taunt Bill King, that it was purely and simply a case of premeditated murder.

"Well, by George!" he exclaimed, as a new thought struck him. "Francisco isn't dead yet! Maybe he won't die, so unless Mazaro treats me to a load of his buckshot or that sweet little brother-in-law gets well and tries to beat me to death, I may come out all right yet."

But before night a new phase was given to King's troubles, and one that made his former anxiety fade to a mere mirage. In searching through his legal books and pamphlets he learned something new. That in just seven days the annual term of court would be held in Paradise! In fulfillment of his oath of office, he, the County Attorney, must, on the opening day of court, present to the Grand Jury all violations of the law within the jurisdiction of his office. When he took the oath, this meant nothing and the date made no impression upon him. Now the awful meaning of it stunned him. In seven days he must prosecute Mazaro Gonzales for taking his advice!

"I can't do it, that's all," he repeated again and again. "I can't prosecute that poor devil for doing what I told him to do. And if I don't, I'll have to lay the case before the Grand Jury; make a clean breast of it; exonerate Mazaro, and then—then it's Big William once more to the railroad-ties!"

ALL this while Mazaro was glorying in his incarceration, hoping, praying that his shot had been fatal; glad to stay in jail, willing to eat crusts, to sleep on a dirty floor, to suffer anything if only Francisco were dead and little Bonita would smile up into his face as she did when she used to bake his *tortillas* before the little adobe cabin had seemed so lonely and Bonita so sad.

For seven days Francisco lay unconscious on the sheepskin on the floor of old Maria's hut where the Deputy-Sheriff had carried him on the night of the crime. There were no hospitals in Paradise. There was seldom need for them. Usually the Mexicans did their work so well that a priest and a grave-digger performed the last rites without the aid of a hospital.

But Mazaro had miscalculated somewhere and death was not instantaneous as he had prayed it might be. If Mazaro had but seen little Bonita hovering over her liege lord during those hours of unconsciousness and delirium, and ministering to his wants with her left hand while around her right she wore a huge bandage covering the marks of her husband's last caress, he would have bitten through the bars of his cell and completed his work. But Mazaro didn't see. He only prayed in his cell.

At last the seven days had passed and the day before the opening of court arrived, with Big Bill King in a state of mind bordering on insanity. In all that god-forsaken town there was no one ear into which he could pour his tale of woe with any hope of sympathy. He had determined on the only course possible—to lay his story before the Grand Jury and take his medicine. He had reached the ultimate limit in his state of anxiety and was waiting for the Grand Jury to convene and know the worst.

Just out of curiosity, he thought, he would make a call upon old Maria and inquire after the ill-being of Francisco. Old Maria was baking in the little bee-hivelike oven outside her house.

"How is Francisco to-day?" he asked of her.

"He gon-a home; tak' away from these plaze, señor," she replied indifferently.

"What!" he shouted in her ears, so loud

that she dropped the hot coals she was raking. "He's not dead?" and his voice trembled with the burden of this last straw.

"No, no dead. Gon-a home with Bonita." And she adjusted the black shawl on her head and turned to go in the low door, but hesitated and added, as though uncertain whether the information contained news: "Mazaro, he gon-a, too, to hees plaze," and the door closed.

Here was new field for thought for the County Attorney. The execution of the law, it seemed, was being handled in Paradise unaided by the County Attorney. Mazaro had been arrested without his signature to the complaint, and had been released, likewise without his assistance. Now that the fear of the Grand Jury no longer stared him in the face, he was beginning to feel annoyed that the County Attorney was of so little account in Paradise, when he remembered that Deputy-Sheriff Hawkins had told him once that in Paradise they "never monkeyed with anything less than murder." "If they kills 'em," Hawkins had said, "all right. If they don't kill 'em, we don't have no time to bother with trials."

"Well, I guess my job's good for the rest of the year," King assured himself. "That is, it's good unless Mazaro gets another two-bits' worth of buckshot and happens around my way." He had never uprooted the lurking suspicion that Mazaro would hold him responsible for his arrest.

But Mazaro didn't trouble Big Bill King's slumbers that night and, for the first time since the day Mazaro followed his advice, King slept.

EARLY in the morning he was at the office to prepare for the opening of court. He had started dusting his library and had reached "Chitty on Criminal Law" when a timid knock was heard at the door.

"Come in!" he shouted, at least he started to shout, but the "in" died away in a faint whisper as Mazaro Gonzales entered, greasy sombrero in hand.

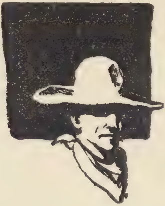
The County Attorney got ready to dodge the buckshot, but found sufficient voice to ask the Mexican to be seated. Mazaro stood shyly just inside the doorway. In a voice lowered to the most abject apology and with his chin drawn in until it rested on a dirty handkerchief tied around his neck, he mumbled:

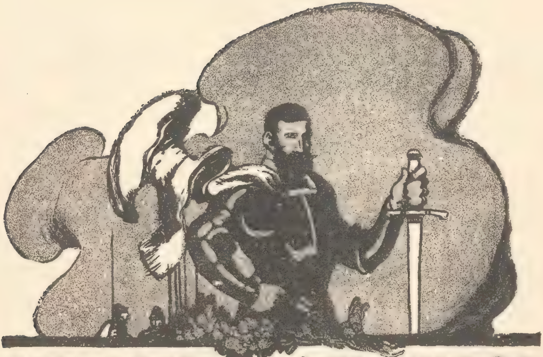
"Señor, Meester King," he began, "are you perfeckly disgust with me?"

By this time the County Attorney's voice had left him completely. He looked blankly at Mazaro and waited.

Bowing as though revealing an unpardonable sin to his father confessor, while a great light dawned over Big Bill King, Mazaro Gonzales gulped twice and said:

"Well, you see, señor—you see, Ol' Lars he don't keep no buckshot. You can't kill no man with birdshot!"





SIR JOHN HAWKWOOD

A TALE OF THE WHITE COMPANY IN ITALY

BY MARION POLK ANGELLOTTI

SYNOPSIS: Sir John Hawkwood, the famous English mercenary, at the time of this story in the service of Della Scala, Prince of Verona, boldly refuses to kidnap the Prince's ward and cousin, the Princess Giulia, and allow the Prince to make a pretended rescue for the purpose of furthering his love-suit. Hawkwood and his lieutenant, O'Meara (in love with the Princess's friend, Francesca di Montalto), fear a treacherous revenge; Hawkwood overhears a plot of the Prince's favorite, Della Torre, and his wife Violante, to undo him by a false charge of treachery. He attempts to warn Giulia, but she repulses him with scorn for his low birth and riotous life. He forcibly retains her scarf to wear as his colors in battle. Ashamed of his past life and regardless of his own great danger, Sir John forestalls Potrero, the Prince's henchman, and himself carries off the Princess, her uncle Del Mayno, and Francesca to a deserted castle. Del Mayno is released. Sir John plans to hold the castle against the Prince till aid comes from Florence enabling him to send the Princess to her kinsman, the Duke of Padua. The Princess regards him as a mercenary cut-throat and even attempts to stab him.

CHAPTER XVII

AN ATTACK FROM WITHIN

I COULD make shift to hold the place for as long as our scant provisions lasted, unless Prince Antonio came against me with a large force and powerful cannon. And I thought he would not do this until he had wasted time in sending Gianni Potrero, or another troop of the same sort—and every hour gained was an aid to me, since in ten days or thereabouts I might look for succor from Florence. At intervals I made the rounds of the castle to see that my men were not nodding at their posts. I found nothing of that sort, but it was plain that a spirit of discord was stirring. When I came on two men together, they were deep in some conference which they broke off with an air half sheepish and half sullen. The meaning of all this was easy to guess. There had been a deal of secret discussion as to why the Prince's cousin was our prisoner, and some of my troop had come to the conclusion that the business was not to their liking.

Returning to the hall, I kicked the fire and polished the hilt of my sword. A mutiny! And if I fell, what would then become of the Princess? I shuddered to think what might chance if O'Meara and I were cut down and the wild horde about us were left free to do their own will. However, it was useless to worry. I needed all my strength and had better try to sleep. But hardly had I closed my eyes when a new thought sent me to my feet in a cold chill. What if some among my men should try tampering with the Princess' door? In the end I stretched myself at full length close to her threshold on the stone paving.

In the morning I bade O'Meara take food to the ladies, whom I had no intention of seeking that day. It was quite useless, I knew, to try to convince the Princess of my good faith, and I had resolved to make no further effort.

O'Meara did not return, and after finishing my meal in solitude I began to experience considerable curiosity as to what he could be about. Yielding at last, I went quietly up the stairs, and paused with my foot on the topmost step, my mouth falling open in astonishment.

Francesca and O'Meara had come out into the gallery. I smiled. Since Giulia had failed the night before in her attempt to crush me with her anger and her cold steel, no doubt her lady had determined to see if she might not have better luck in winning O'Meara over to their cause.

A wide stone bench was built into the wall, and on this lay Madonna Francesca in the most limp and pathetic heap imaginable, her misty golden hair disheveled, her dark eyes full of tears, her pretty lips quivering in a fashion that might well have made any living man long to kiss them into smiles. The Irishman stood before her, and at sight of him I came near to betraying my presence with a roar of mirth. Never in my life had I beheld such a picture of abject cowardice as he now appeared before this little golden-haired lady.

"Ah," she sobbed, piteously enough. "I can not believe it of you, Messer O'Meara, indeed I can not! Only two days ago we were in the Prince's *loggia*, and you swore you loved me with all your heart and soul——"

"And I did that same!" he protested passionately.

She turned away from him pettishly. "I can never trust you again, I can never look on you without fear and horror!" she informed him relentlessly. "Do you think I shall ever forget the ride you gave me yesterday? I am stiff and sore and frightened yet —and see how you bruised my finger against your steel vest! It is blue at the tip, you can see for yourself!" And she extended a little, white hand with an intensely tragic gesture.

The utter horror that instantly depicted itself on O'Meara's face appeared to mollify her slightly, and amused me to such a point that I came near betraying my presence by a burst of laughter. A bruised finger, indeed! The Irishman was accustomed to see blood run like water, and I had seen him take wounds that were near mortal with never a groan, yet his anguished solicitude was as sincere as though he were some young girl who had never looked on a bare blade.

I LEFT the two at their wrangling and made the round of the castle, finding nothing that heartened me greatly. The dissatisfaction of the men had grown in the night; presently there would be an outbreak—and I found myself looking forward to it with an uneasiness I had never felt before in time of peril. I gave no sign, but strode about briskly, praising some, rating others, giving curt orders after my usual fashion, but I knew that the instant my gaze was off them they fell to grumbling and plotting behind my back. The air had the still tenseness of a coming storm. And if my own troopers turned against me, how was I to hold the castle against Antonio?

Weary and disheartened, I went up on the battlements, gazing across the black woods and the fertile country that melted away in the distance. How soon might I hope to see the Florentine troop come across that stretch of land to help me in my need? And what if, for reasons of policy, they should forget my old services and fail me? I decided that it was best not to consider this possibility. Come what might, having gone thus far I must go farther, and save the Princess.

I had been reflecting in melancholy solitude for perhaps an hour when hurrying footsteps sounded near me and Pierre came rushing into sight. "Sir John, Sir John!" he cried eagerly. "Come below, I beg you! Messer O'Meara has sent me to summon you.

It is the men—curse them, they have gone mad! They say you have betrayed them and turned the Prince against them. Last night they saw the jewels the Princess wore, and now they swear to seize them and scatter over Italy to seek fortune where they may. But first they will kill you and Messer O'Meara, and as for the women——"

I darted down the stairs with him at my heels. There was a ringing in my ears, a quick darkness before my eyes. I was well used to danger and looked for no other fate than to die some day by the sword; nor was my life so noble a thing that I would have grieved greatly over the losing of it. But the Princess! Had I brought her here that she might fall into the hands of men like my mercenaries? Better a thousand times that I had left her to Antonio della Scala! The thought lent wings to my feet as I hurried down into the castle.

The murmur of voices told me that the men were gathered in the gallery. As I drew nearer I caught the angry note in their tones, the accent of unbridled lawlessness that spelt terrible danger. For a moment I paused on the stairs, knowing better than to burst in upon them with any appearance of haste and fright; and in that moment my anxiety seemed to pass away, leaving me confident of my power to rule the storm.

A great crash fell on my ears, followed by a hoarse, evil shout of triumph. Delaying no longer, I left the stairs and strode into the gallery.

The crash had been caused by the breaking in of the Princess' door, which had flown into splinters. The men were surging forward now, then giving back slightly, for in the opening stood O'Meara, his face white with anger, his eyes blazing, and his drawn sword flashing in his hand. Behind him stood Madonna Giulia. She was very pale and had a look of restrained horror, but held herself proudly erect and made no sign of fear. Francesca was clinging to her in terror, trembling and hiding her face.

"God curse ye all for a set of cowardly devils!" O'Meara was crying fiercely. "Come on, then—come on, and taste cold steel! Never fear, Princess—and you, mavourneen, keep up heart," he encouraged the ladies, across his shoulder. "'Tis Sir John will be after settling the knaves in the wink of an eye when he comes." He gave a war-whoop of delight at seeing me. "All's well now," he went on to the ladies, with an easy assurance most flattering to my powers. "Make yourselves easy, and never trouble to look any more at these dogs!"

I strode across the gallery, straight through the crowd, which parted instinctively to give me room. I had reached O'Meara and the doorway before one of the men shrieked out, bidding the others cut me off and end me with a dagger-thrust. Again they surged forward, and I looked on a circle of fierce, evil faces full of the dangerous passions of the wild beast. All were armed. I caught the flash of many a ragged-looking knife and many a keen cutlass. Instinctively I turned my head for a glance at the Princess. Her eyes had the look of one who gazed on a vision of hell, nor did they change as they rested on me. To her I was but of the rest, as evil as they, as brutal. And I have no doubt I appeared so in that instant, for I had learned long ago that the only fashion in which one might rule a band of wild ruffians like my free lances was by playing the part of a wilder ruffian than the greatest among them; and I confronted them now with a look fierce and grim enough to put their swagger to shame.

CHAPTER XVIII

ONE AGAINST MANY

"WELL!" I said sternly. "And what does this mean, I should be glad to hear? I commanded that this gallery should be kept empty; I come down to find my entire force assembled in it, and a door broken to bits! Who is to blame, then? Who has led you? Faith, I would not choose to stand in his boots, for by my knightly spurs I will have him beaten to a jelly for this day's work! Answer me, you dogs—what does this thing mean?"

They kept silence for a moment—so strong is the habit of obedience that my unmoved front made them quail. Had I hesitated ever so little, then they would surely have struck me down, and the Princess' fate would have been irrevocably sealed. Since I confronted them threateningly, they looked half shame-faced, and no one seemed anxious to make the first move against the door.

"Well, am I to stand here forever staring at you?" I demanded, and backed the question with such a volley of camp oaths as no doubt offended the Princess more than the sight of steel. "Have you lost your tongues? You have lost your courage, at least, I see! And you have good cause to lose it, for you shall all pay for this! What, is there no one of you that dares stand forward and face me? Rally up your spirits, find a spokesman who will dare tell me what all this may mean!"

There was a growl of threatening anger, and, encouraged by the sound, the leader ventured to step forward. It was Jacques, as I had guessed from the beginning. I had kept him down with a strong hand and he had many a grudge against me to pay off. Knowing him as I did, I felt anew the danger of the moment. If I failed, if Madonna Giula fell into this man's hands——

"So, it is you!" I cried contemptuously, as he came a pace forward. "A pity they could get no better leader! Let me tell you, my friend, an hour from now there will not be an inch of skin left on your back, so flaunt your time while you may, and act the hero! Go on—have you no tongue, after all?"

For a moment he quailed, then laughed maliciously. "My back is safe enough, *mon capitaine*," he mocked. "In an hour—in a half-hour—nay, in half of that—you will be dead! We have had enough of you—we are finished with the White Company! When you are gone we will go back to France and take service there. Say a prayer, Sir John, if you have not forgotten the art. We will give you a moment to save your soul!" The others, surging forward ominously, laughed in an evil fashion at the jest.

"I am not dead yet," I said coolly, "nor do I think that such rogues as you can ever kill me. But come, you make me curious. Why is it that you are all so angered against me?" And I began to rock on my heels, laughing as at the best joke in the world.

"Because you are a traitor to us, *mon capitaine!*" the ruffian answered, showing his teeth in a snarling smile. "You turned against Prince Antonio, giving us no warning of it, and embarked in this scheme against his cousin. Now our lives are not worth a pin here in Verona. You have put all our heads into a noose, but it is only your neck that will be wrung! What do you say to that, Sir John Hawkwood?" He had come quite close to me, and was sneering maliciously into my face.

* * *

THE situation was desperate and I took the only possible course, one which might, I knew, bring ruin on us, or might perhaps save us—there was no guessing which. "What do I say?" I retorted. "I say that you need a lesson in the proper fashion of address to use to your captain, and that I shall give it to you!" And I caught him by the back of the neck and began to beat him lustily with the flat of my sword.

At his cry of rage and pain I was quite sure that his comrades would sweep forward and annihilate me; but they did nothing of the sort. Jacques was not too well loved among them, though he had a large following in his rebellion, and I have small doubt it was the general sentiment that one so boastful as he should be able to defend himself. Since he was apparently capable of doing nothing more than struggle helplessly in my grasp and yell to them for succor, they at once experienced a feeling of contempt for him, and an added respect for me. For the moment, at least, my bold move had succeeded.

"Have you more to say, you dog?" I asked grimly, as I belabored him. "Then let us hear it, by all means! Are you turned coward already? Another time you will mind your manners with me, I think!" And I added another string of oaths for the benefit of my hearers, who thought no speech emphatic which was not so garnished. "Well, is your lesson learned, or will you have more? Ah, would you then, knave?"

He had made a desperate clutch at his dagger and got it out of its sheath; seeing which, and none too soon, I struck him full across the side of the head with the hilt of my sword, and he fell like a log at my feet, in a dead swoon. I kicked the body out of my way.

"Well," I said coolly, turning to confront the others, "and who comes next to question me?"

No one answered. Had they rushed me where I stood, as I had looked for them to do, nothing on earth could have saved me. O'Meara and I stood alone, two against two-score. But as I looked about the circle, a feeling of triumph ran through my veins like wine.

There were men at the rear of the crowd who had taken no part in the tumult, who had merely waited to see how the tide would turn. These, I knew, were not unfriendly to me. Others were well enough disposed save for a natural anger at the thought that I had led them into danger of the Prince's vengeance for some purpose of my own.

There was a movement in the crowd, and Pierre came through and faced me. "I hope, Sir John, you'll not use me as you did Jacques," he said, kicking contemptuously at the fallen man and grinning broadly, "but I'd like to ask you a question of my own. You've led us for years now, and if in some ways you've been a hard master, you've been a just one, too. You've played us fair, and never tricked us. I believe the same of you now. We can't tell why you have the Prince's cousin here a prisoner, but I'll never believe you are leading us into danger without good reason. Just tell me as much, and say that you mean to play us fair, and I'll stand for you against any odds that come!"

THE time for close-mouthed defiance had passed. I must quiet these fellows with some plausible explanation of my strange actions. To be sure, it would not be wholly true, and it is the bounden duty of all knights to scorn false statements. As a common thing I was as truthful as any other man, but in the present situation, with the lives of us all hanging on the fall of the dice, I admit without shame that I would have sworn away my soul if I could thereby have added one iota to the Princess' safety.

"Why, you fools," I began, with an appearance of bluff heartiness, "I am leading you into no danger at all, though I will admit the enterprise is a trifle difficult. Since you have come to your senses and ceased to threaten me, I am willing enough to tell you the meaning of it all. A short time since I overheard Prince Antonio conferring with Della Torre, and learned that he was weary of my services and had it in mind to turn me off. That was a poor prospect both for me and for you, eh? So I looked about for a way to better it. Well, I knew that this lady was kin to the Duke of Padua, who claims her as his ward and has long tried to get possession of her; and I fancied he might be willing to give a rich reward to those who put her in his hands. I held secret communication with him, and arranged the terms—then I carried off the lady. We are to hold her safe here until the Duke sends a strong escort to bring us safely into Padua, where we will be well treated, I can promise you. Come, is not this better than waiting in Verona until Prince Antonio is pleased to turn us adrift? And have I not a shrewder head than this fellow Jacques, who would have persuaded you that I had some trick in mind? Our reward will pay us well for all our trouble. Are you content?"

I heard the Princess give a low gasp behind me, but for the moment I paid her no heed at all. I was looking with desperate eagerness at the troopers to see if they accepted what I had said. If they did, all was well. Fired by the hope of gain, they would defend the castle like madmen, and we would be safe until the Florentine men came to my aid. After that, I cared very little how soon they knew I had tricked them in my tale. After conferring for a time they began to give back sheepishly, some of them cursing Antonio for his plan to throw us over and congratulating themselves on the rare revenge of robbing him of his cousin; others guessing how much Francesco Carrara would give for so great a service. Presently, too, they began to cast furtive glances at me, as if uncertain how I might be inclined to visit my anger at their unruliness upon them. "Oh, we were fools to doubt you, Sir John! You have a better head than any of us," one of the ring-leaders muttered apologetically.

"You will be fools if you do it twice, for I shall not be so patient again!" I answered grimly. "Take yourselves off while I stay in a good-natured mood!"

They obeyed me with cheers and glances of admiration, and in a moment the gallery was empty.

CHAPTER XIX

THE COMING OF VIOLANTE

WHEN the last man had clattered down the stairs I swung about on my heel and faced the three who had stood behind me throughout the episode. O'Meara had appeared to enjoy himself a great deal more than the circumstances warranted. On my coming, all feeling of responsibility and anxiety had seemed to leave him, and he had leaned calmly on the wall, watching my struggles with a merry glint in his blue eyes, and laughing heartily when I pommeled Jacques into submission. Now that all was over he sheathed his sword, then flung his arms about me and favored me with a bear's embrace which came near making my ribs crack.

"Glory be, 'twas yourself settled them in no time! But the affair was a close one, do you know that? May we never be nearer dying till our last day comes! Faith, at one time I was mortal afraid they'd kill you first," he rattled on.

"Oh, hold your tongue, Michael!" I said curtly, turning to the ladies. Francesca was on her knees with her face in her hands. The Princess was standing proudly erect, her pale face turned toward me, and breathing such indignant contempt as I shall never forget.

"So now at last I have learned the truth, Sir John Hawkwood!" she said in a low voice that trembled curiously with emotion. "You have taken a bribe from the Duke of Padua to seize me and bring me to him! Now I understand!"

For an instant I did not answer her. Perhaps I had cherished some vague hope that the manner in which I had saved her from imminent death might a little soften her toward me—might perhaps even lead her to say a proud word of thanks. The scorn and anger in her face hurt me sharply.

She continued to look at me with a searching disdain. "Listen, sir," she said presently, in the tone which she might have used to a dog. "You care only for money. Honor, knightliness, chivalry—all these are nothing to you. Good—I will make you an offer. Tell me what Francesco Carrara has promised you for this pretty business, and I will give you double the sum to set me free."

I bowed low to her. "Thank you, madonna," I said, with a bitter laugh. "Remember that even a man as vile as I may not care to betray the master whose enterprise he has undertaken. I believe that even my enemies do not deny me this one virtue."

HER face twisted suddenly. "How can it be, how can it be!" she cried, turning away from me passionately. "Is there no good in you, that you treat a helpless girl so for your own gain? Have you no shred of knightliness, you that wear a knight's spurs?" She confronted me again, and this time her eyes were kinder. "When you stood between me and that crowd of cut-throats, Sir John Hawkwood, my heart softened to you. I thought at least he is a brave man, at least he does not fear to risk his life. And a moment later I heard from your own lips for what base motive you had brought me here! It is too much; I can not believe that any man can fall so low!"

"Madonna Giulia," I cried, "listen to me! What I told the men was but a tale of my own inventing, a means to pacify them and turn them off. Do you not——"

Her face hardened again. "I do not believe you!" she flung at me. "By your own confession you have lied either to me or to your troopers, and I have no trust for a knight who lies. Do your will with me—I am a helpless woman who can not wield a sword——"

"Small matter for that, Princess, when you possess a tongue!" I retorted, stung out of my manners. "Since you choose to disbelieve me, I will say no more. As your door is broken down, I must beg you to cross the gallery and enter the room there at the right."

She hesitated for a moment, looking as if she would speak again, but my grim manner silenced her. She was turning away when Pierre came hastily into the gallery.

"Your pardon, Sir John," he cried, much excited, "but a small company of horsemen are coming from the direction of Verona! What they want I can not guess, for they are not enough to storm the castle——"

"Wait for me below!" I cut him short. Then, striding across the gallery, I opened the door of the room I had chosen for the ladies, bowed to them, and awaited their entrance. The Princess stood motionless, her color risen, her eyes bright as stars.

"Men are coming from Verona!" she cried. "They are coming to find me, to free me—is it not so?"

"That, Princess," I answered coldly, "is what I propose to descend and discover, if you will first oblige me by entering this room."

"You will keep me imprisoned here?" she cried angrily. "You will let me know nothing of this party that has ridden here to help me?"

"Depend upon it, Princess, whatever troop of horsemen ride to Castel Paura to effect your liberty will turn their horses' heads back to Verona with their object unfulfilled!"

Our eyes met in a clashing glance. "You have the right of force, Sir John Hawkwood," she said coldly, taking Francesca's hand in hers and drawing the girl forward. They entered the room together, and I closed the door and drew the outer bolt.

"Come," I said quickly to O'Meara, and we ran swiftly up to the battlements of the castle.

OFF in the distance a small group of horsemen were riding in the direction of our stronghold. They might have been a dozen, not more. "There is no danger," I said to the Irishman, drawing a breath of relief as my eye ranged over them. "But why are they coming here?"

O'Meara muttered an oath and caught my arm. "Do you see—do you see?" he cried excitedly. "'Tis a woman there in the midst of them! Now by all that's wonderful, Sir John, can you tell me what it is that a woman's wanting here?"

"I can tell you that she is here for no good purpose," I said curtly, "for I have just recognized her as Madonna Violante, Della Torre's wife, and of all women I have ever seen she is the most dangerous. Let us go down into the court and set Pierre to parleying with them across the moat."

That worthy presently returned with a puzzled face. "It is my Lord Ranucio della Torre, Sir John—the Prince's favorite," he told me. "He wants speech with you, and begs permission to enter with two of his party. He will tell me nothing of his business."

"Lower the draw-bridge and let them in," I commanded, "but take care that no more than three pass the portcullis."

A moment later I heard the hoofs of the horses rattling on the crazy draw-bridge. My troopers came thronging into the courtyard in great excitement.

Della Torre came first, a splendid sight, as always, and as serene and haughty as though he were riding into the royal palace at Verona. I had seen very great gentlemen look less at ease when surrounded by my grim-faced ruffians, and much as I detested my Lord Ranucio I admitted inwardly that he was no coward.

Madonna Violante followed him. At sight of her a cold shiver ran over me, a presentiment of evil. And yet what harm could come? Truly, I was growing womanish! Hastily I turned to look at the third arrival, who proved to be no other than Gianni Potrero.

There was a moment's silence, then I stepped forward with a low bow. "Welcome, my lady—welcome, my lord the favorite, and you, sir knight of the noble order of bravoes!" I cried, saluting each in turn. "Who would have guessed that one day Sir John Hawkwood would receive so noble a party in his own castle—that the great Della Torre would be kept waiting at the moat! Well, and how can I serve you, that you deign to flatter me by taking note of my existence?"

Messer Gianni gave me a very black look, while Madonna Violante stared through me as though I were made of air. As for Della Torre, he dismounted slowly, came forward a step, and spoke in a remote, indifferent fashion. "Sir John Hawkwood," he said, "I have not come here to talk of your mad and fatal act. All that you will settle later with Prince Antonio. I have come here to-day at my master's bidding to demand one thing of you, which, if you possess any honor, you can not refuse."

"Well?" I asked curtly. "It is plainly to be seen you are no soldier, you waste so much good time in words."

He flushed and gave me an angry glance. "Prince Antonio is filled with anguish at the brutal seizure of his cousin," he said, trying to resume his measured fashion of speech. "If you have any spark of chivalry left in your nature, you will allow Madonna Violante to speak alone with the Princess and to learn from her own lips whether she has come to any harm."

I stood in silence for a time, reflecting. I was sure that some deep plot underlay the seemingly simple request, and yet my reckless pride rose up. I hated Della Torre, I hated Violante, and I would not have them think that I feared them or anything they might do.

I turned to O'Meara, who had stood at my elbow throughout the scene. "Go to the Princess," I bade him. "If she wishes for an interview, the matter is all one to me."

CHAPTER XX

BLACK CLOUDS

"I TRUST, Sir John, that this is not a trick," Della Torre sneered, as Michael left us. "I know something of that Irishman of yours—he would swear black was white at your bidding."

"Pray do not judge Messer O'Meara by

yourself, my lord!" I answered politely. "I am well aware that it is your business to lie in your master's service, and that you do it with great success; but it is an accomplishment that I have never required from my followers."

A guffaw from my troopers pointed the remark and increased Della Torre's fury. He fingered his sword-hilt, then controlled himself with an effort. "You use insult safely, Sir John Hawkwood!" he told me, in a voice thickened with passion. "You know that I can not stoop to fight you!"

"Perhaps it is more prudent in you to refrain," I mocked. "You remember, no doubt, how I served your friend Lord Raimondo."

"I prefer to wait," he answered, white with fury, "and see the business done by hands more fit than mine to touch you! The Prince has some pleasant plans for your end, Sir John. You recall how he served the traitor Cagliari? Your death will be more lingering——"

"He has not caught me yet," I pointed out. "Keep your sympathy till it is needed, my good friend. Is it the wheel he plans for me, or will he despatch me secretly with a dagger-thrust? I have heard that the latter is his favorite device. Was it not so that you and he rid Verona of Bartolomeo della Scala?"

His pallor told me that the blow had gone home. He was about to favor me with a fierce retort when O'Meara's voice announced from behind us that the Princess desired instant speech with Madonna Violante. I shrugged my shoulders and bit my lip, for I had entertained a feeble hope that she might refuse, since she had no love for the favorite's shrewd, scheming wife.

Della Torre went over to his wife, assisted her gallantly to dismount, and offered her his arm to lead her into the castle. I waved him back. "Messer O'Meara will escort the Lady Violante to the Princess," I stated coldly. "You, my lord, will remain here."

For the second time Della Torre flinched, for his wife was the one person in the world for whom he felt real tenderness.

"What matter, my lord?" she said, gently loosening his clasp. "I am not afraid. Sir John Hawkwood, I see, enjoys the giving of orders and the regulating of trifles. Well, surely it would be cruel in us to deny him this pleasure—he will have so short a time to play the master!" She gave me a contemptuous glance, then swept into the castle, her head high, O'Meara following her, looking rather grim.

* * *

FOR a time there was silence save for the whispers of my staring troopers. Della Torre was obviously uneasy, Messer Gianni in the sulks. Being none too happy myself, I decided to divert myself with some further exchange of wit with these two.

"Well, now, Potrero," I began, "tell me frankly, as one soldier to another, did you not admire the pretty fashion in which I seized your prey from under your nose at the inn yesterday?"

He scowled furiously. "He laughs best who laughs last, Sir John," he muttered. "Yes, you played me a pretty trick, but for all that I would not like to stand in your boots now!"

"You speak very mysteriously. I see you have a plot in progress against me," I remarked. "Faith, I am glad to be quit of the Veronese Court—never did I see a place so full of plots; they make the head of a plain, blunt Englishman turn round. There is Della Torre, for instance. Two days ago he was plotting with his wife to forge a packet in my hand, convey it to the Prince's notice, and so convict me of conspiracy with Padua and put me from his way forever!"

Della Torre turned white as death and gazed at me as at an apparition from the grave.

"You are mad!" he muttered through dry lips, after a long moment of frightened silence which I enjoyed to the full. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that a man should not plan such evil tricks in an open *loggia* where he may well be overheard," I answered airily. "You look extremely foolish, Della Torre. If the Prince could see you now I think he would regret that he ever gave his favor to a person who so much resembled an imbecile. Take my counsel—if you must blacken your noble soul with such schemes, at least school yourself to meet discovery without such a look of guilt!"

"Keep your advice!" he answered rudely, recovering himself. "It is you that are the fool, Sir John Hawkwood. Had you flattered the Prince and done all he bade you, in time you might have supplanted me, and ruled Verona! Instead, you stake your life on this mad enterprise, the saints know why, and will come to such an end as will make you envy the traitor Cagliari!"

"That is as may be," I answered, shrugging. "Whatever my fate proves, I shall never envy you, my Lord Ranucio. But here is Madonna Violante returned to bear witness that I have not cut the Princess' throat or robbed her of her jewels!"

Della Torre's wife paused beside us, as calm and composed as ever. "The Princess is unhurt," she said to her husband, "and has met with no injury save the outrage of the seizure, for which this man must answer to the Prince. Come, we have done our errand; let us get back to Verona."

Della Torre helped her to her horse, mounted his own, and made me a low and mocking bow. "Farewell, Sir John," he sneered. "We give you thanks for your courtesy. When we meet again, I think we shall stand on a very different footing!"

"Since truthfulness and plain-speaking are a soldier's virtues," I answered coolly, "I must tell you with all frankness that it would not greatly displease me were we never to meet again."

"I believe it!" he cried, with a mocking laugh. "But the Prince desires otherwise—and the Prince's will be done, say I!" Again he saluted me, and they moved slowly out of the court-yard.

I turned to O'Meara. "She did not come here to pass the time of day with the Princess," I said, knitting my brows. "What have they got in their minds?"

He shook his head. "I've no power to read thoughts, but it's mischief," he said. "Ah, I hate her—that woman! Were I Della Torre, I would have cut her throat the day after the wedding, except for the fact that I would never have wedded her at all!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE WAITING

THE day passed uneventfully, and the night, and the next day. Under this inactivity lay something that menaced me—something that I would learn when it was too late.

Madonna Violante's coming had one visible result—it wrought a change in the Princess' behavior. Hardly had the little troop ridden away from the castle when she sent for me. "You are shrewd enough to know, Sir John, that two helpless girls can not fly across a moat," she said, with some scorn, "and therefore you surely need not fear to let us go where we please within the castle walls. I am not accustomed to imprisonment, and it wearies me. As for Madonna Francesca, she is pining like a bird in a cage."

I was willing enough to grant her request, for, now that my men believed they were to gain a rich reward for taking her to Padua, she was quite safe at their hands. "Surely, Princess, go where you please," I answered. "I would have given you the freedom of the castle sooner had I guessed you would care to wander about it."

She shrugged slightly. "There is small good in moping over what can not be helped," she said coldly. "Come, Francesca, we will go on the battlements and breathe Spring air again, since our jailer is pleased to be merciful."

After that they roamed the castle at their will. More than once I found her questioning one of my men in her haughty fashion, and getting answers that were roughly civil. Most of the time she sat on the battlements gazing off in the direction of Verona. O'Meara was often with them, for the sight of Francesca seemed to draw him like a magnet; and though the Princess treated him very coldly at first, I think she ended by liking him, as indeed few people in the world could have failed to do after a brief acquaintance.

As for me, I held to myself and spent my time in solitude. If there were hours when I longed to join the group, if at times the Princess' proud pale face beckoned me even as Francesca's merry mocking eyes drew the Irishman, I was too proud to yield. She scorned and distrusted me when I was freely risking my life to help her. Very good, she should not have my hateful company to endure. I preferred to pass lonely hours in the castle hall, thinking of many things, wishing vaguely that I might wipe out ten years of my life and live them over in a different fashion. Oh, I was not too happy, and if there were sins in my life I think I paid the price of them in those days when I held the Princess prisoner for the sake of her own good.

* * *

IT WAS near nightfall of the second day, and for hours I had been struggling fiercely with the longing to see the Princess. I cursed myself angrily for a fool. Far better to stay alone, to save at least a shred of dignity in her eyes by not thrusting myself into her presence when she had plainly shown me her contempt. And yet, even as I told myself this, I got to my feet and went slowly into the castle.

There were voices in the room that opened from the gallery, and I paused at the door, still silently urging myself to play the man and remain apart. I could pass on unnoticed. Yet I stood there motionless, gazing at the Princess, who sat by the window with the last light of the sun falling across her dark hair.

She was thinking deeply, it appeared, for her face was turned away from O'Meara and Francesca. My heart beat more quickly as I looked at her. She was the loveliest woman in the world, I thought, and the farthest from me by birth and nature. Why was I standing there with my eyes glued to her face? It gave me no pleasure, only suffering, and I would do better to go see if my men were keeping their watch.

"And so, glory be," O'Meara concluded, with great enthusiasm, "we drove them flying before us into the back of beyant, and the day was ours—and all thanks to Sir John!"

The Princess turned slowly toward him. "You think him a great man, this master of yours?" she asked, with some scorn in her voice.

"Was it master you said, Princess?" O'Meara demanded, turning to her with ready good-fellowship, for he was equally at ease with a king or with a beggar. "No, you're wrong to use that word. There's no man in all this broad beautiful earth of ours that can call himself master of an O'Meara. But if you mean the finest general that ever stepped, the rarest leader, the best friend and greatest soldier, why then, yes, I'm thinking he's the greatest man I've ever known or ever will know!"

I had dragged myself a few paces from the door, repeating again and again that I must not enter. Francesca's pretty voice came to me faintly as she broke in. "At first I hated your captain," she told him, "but now there are times when I think he does not appear altogether evil. He has the look of one who suffers for his sins——"

"You are mad, child!" cried the Princess. "Think of the tales they tell of him in Verona—a ruffian, a cut-throat, drinking in taverns, quarreling in the streets, swearing and buffeting, ruling his men by terror!" She broke off as if in utter distaste for my many crimes.

My hesitation was at an end. Come what might of it, I would see her and talk with her, though heaven knew what I could say, for her charges were all true enough, and I had no intention of denying them.

"That's as unjust a speech as ever you uttered, Madonna!" cried my faithful comrade. "You've heard these tales from Court fops, I'll swear—jackdaws not fit to touch Sir John's shoes! Let them once try to equal what he's done and they'll change their tune! 'Tis blithe I'd be to set them in the midst of a bloody battle, with the odds all against them and the day well-nigh lost, and then see if they'd be after knowing the way to bring order from slaughter and victory from despair, as I've seen Sir John do more times than I could count——"

"There, Michael, you have chanted my praises enough," I said, and they started as I strode across the room. "I have just come from the battlements, where the evening breeze is very soft and sweet. Madonna Francesca, I am sure, would enjoy it greatly if you took her there to walk."

Francesca, I thought, felt no great distaste for the proposal, but she evidently considered it due herself to crush me for my presumption. "I will go if the Princess desires me to leave her, and not otherwise, Sir John," she answered saucily, with a fling of her head.

Madonna Giulia folded her hands in her lap and assumed a look of proud endurance. "Have you not learned yet, child," she asked, "that Sir John Hawkwood is the master here, and that we needs must do as he wills? What matter whether I desire you to go or stay, if he bids you go?"

"You wrong me, Princess," I said, looking at her straightly. "Do me the justice to admit that I have not once entered your presence save when you have sent to bid me come. If you desire it, I will leave you now—you are the mistress, and may command."

"I had not guessed it!" she retorted. "But there, what matter? Go, Francesca, and I will stay to hear what our jailer desires to tell me."

FRANCESCA went out readily enough, O'Meara following her in unmistakable rapture at the prospect of an interview in which to urge his suit. The Princess and I kept silence for a time, then she turned her head and looked at me. "Perhaps, Sir John," she said, "you have thought better of my offer to out-bid the Duke of Padua? Is it of that you wish to speak?"

"No," I answered grimly. Why had I sought speech with one who had such power to hurt me with every word?

"It would have been better for you had you accepted that offer when I made it," she murmured, and I thought there was a tinge of regret in her voice. "Now I shall escape in spite of you, and the Prince will not show you any mercy."

"I do not need his mercy yet," I answered more cheerfully, "and I hope that I never shall."

We were silent again. I turned and walked the length of the room twice or thrice, seeking for words to express the things I wished to tell her. Looking up suddenly, I caught her regarding me with a gaze that held reluctant pity, and my thoughts went back to Violante's strange visit. Then I forgot all else in the consciousness of Madonna Giulia's softer attitude toward me, the sadder look in her proud eyes, the gentler curve of her scarlet lips.

It was she who broke the long silence, and I started, fearing an angry word; but her voice was curiously sad and gentle. "I wonder why you ever came to Italy, Sir John," she said, as if to herself. "I wonder what evil fate ever brought you to Verona."

I did not answer her, lest my voice should break the spell.

"You fought bravely in France," she went on, "you won a knight's spurs, all men honored you. What trick of destiny turned you into such a path as this? Now you will come to a most cruel end, you that might have lived out a long and honored life in your own land. It is a sad thought, and against my will it hurts me."

"I, too, have often wondered why fate played such tricks with me," I answered soberly, "and have cursed destiny and myself. But now, Princess, I am content." She would not understand, I knew, that I was content because I was now standing between her and Antonio della Scala, the one defense that kept her evil kinsman from her. Surely this was payment enough for all the sufferings of my life.

The trouble in her beautiful face was growing steadily. She clasped her hands and pressed them against her heart. "There is something under all this that I can not understand," she said, looking at me strangely. "There is more in you than I can read, Sir John. I have felt it from the first, and struggled against the belief, and tried to think you entirely evil. But to-night—when it is too late—I find myself doubting and regretting." The pride was all gone from her eyes now, and only anxiety remained. "Sir John," she said in a low, uncertain voice, "tell me the truth! Tell me why you brought me to this place!"

"Will you hear me without anger?" I asked. "Will you listen with an open mind to a strange story?"

She bowed her head. "I will try," she answered.

"Then you shall hear," said I, "and I swear by the soul of the Black Prince that I will say no word that is not the truth!"

CHAPTER XXII

FOR LOVE OF A WOMAN

FOR a time there was silence in the dim room, while I gathered my thoughts and tried to still the beating of my heart, and the Princess sat motionless, gazing at me with that strange look of trouble always in her eyes. At last I spoke.

"Before I tell you why I brought you here," I said, "there is something else that you should know—something that has ruled my actions for a long time, that has led us both where we stand to-night. Will you listen, Princess?"

"Yes," she said, in a low voice.

"I have been in Verona for some eight months," I began. "I came here for no love of the Scaligeri, but because Prince Antonio offered me good payment for my sword. You know what I am—a free companion, wandering where my service takes me, fighting now for one man and now another. It is not a very noble profession, though as I have practised it there is no dishonesty in the trade. As for the life I have led, you know that, too—I should be foolish to defend it. I heard you tell O'Meara what you held me—a swaggering cut-throat, a drunken mercenary."

"Perhaps," she said wistfully, "I did you wrong."

"No, you were right," I answered, for I had sworn a solemn oath that she should hear only the truth from my lips. "I was what you thought me—though I think that now I am somewhat better. Well, I came to Verona and entered the Prince's service. One day I went to the palace to take leave of him before marching for an attack on a Paduan fortress. And then, suddenly, I saw you for the first time."

A startled look crossed her face. "You saw—me?" she murmured.

"Yes," I said, "I saw you, standing in the alcove of a window, with a jeweled lute in your hands. You wore a dress the color of dull gold, and had pearls on your neck and in your hair. A little crowd of gentlemen were all about you, and you were singing a soft catch of song. I could repeat it word for word; it has rung in my ears ever since, in battle, in quiet, even in my dreams. When you had finished, all the room applauded you, and you smiled in a proud, indifferent fashion and tossed the lute away. As you did so our eyes met. I suppose you noted me no more than if I had been a picture on the wall, but it was otherwise with me. I went on into the Prince's closet, and he was greatly angered because I seemed to pay no heed to what he told me. Faith, I could not have listened to him then had he possessed the tongue of an angel!"

The Princess had straightened herself slightly. "I do not understand, Sir John," she said, with pride and displeasure entering her voice once more. "You are surely wasting words. What matter when you saw me first?"

"Be patient, Princess," I answered, with a slow smile. "When you know the truth you will see that I deserve some kindness from you—and I ask as my reward only this one hour, and the right to tell you freely what is in my heart."

She sank back in her seat, looking at me with the same strange air of perplexity and trouble.

"As time went on," I continued, "I saw you often. Many a time you passed me on the streets, riding out to the hunt, or with a falcon on your wrist. Sometimes I saw you in the palace garden, walking among the flowers, or plucking roses and lilies. More than once I watched when the Prince led you out to dance. And always, always, from the first moment when my eyes fell on you, I loved you with my whole unworthy heart!"

"Sir John Hawkwood!" she cried sharply. "How dare you say such words? How dare you speak of love to me? You, a mercenary, an adventurer!" Her softness was gone now, and the scornful lady of the past looked at me once more from her lovely face.

"YES, a mercenary, an adventurer, unworthy, God knows, to touch your finger," I answered soberly. "But yet a lover, worshipping you with as deep and reverent an affection as any crowned king or mighty hero ever gave his lady. I had no thought that you would ever learn it, no hope that I might ever win you. I believed that I would never even stand face to face with you and change words on indifferent subjects. Knowing well how far I stood below you, I had no wish to lower you by any contact with me. And yet whenever I might I gazed on you from a distance, and suffered silently and endured proudly—and loved you with all my heart, with all my heart!"

"You loved me—you? A tanner's son?" she cried. It seemed to me that now there was less anger in her tones, though she strove hard to make them cruel.

"I am the son of a tanner," I answered, "yet I love you as never man loved woman before! I could recount to you the tale of each day I saw you. Once, as I passed you, a clasp fell from your sleeve, and I raised it and placed it in your hand. You thanked me coldly, not glancing at me, and my heart beat until it hurt my side. Since the day when first I saw you, your face has been before me always. I saw it in camp when I lay before the fire, and longed to sleep and could not for the pain in my soul. I saw it as I rode into battle, and it so maddened me that at times I prayed for a straight sword-thrust to end my useless life and all its agony. Night and day I saw you, in the streets, in the palace, in the conflict, in the open country——"

"Say rather in the tavern!" she mocked disdainfully. But her voice was faint now.

"Yes, in the tavern, too," I said, "when I sat over the cups till dawn. Does that offend you? It is true. And many a night I drank till I lost all knowledge, only because the dull pain in my heart was beyond my bearing and I could not endure the proud, indifferent gaze your eyes turned on me. You were part of my life, Princess—you were with me in my best moments and in my worst ones. You have made me pay for all my sins—never doubt it! When I thought of what you were, and of what I was, and how far I had fallen from what I might have been, then do you think I did not suffer?"

She did not speak. She was staring at me, her face very pale in the gloom. Night was coming fast, and I could see her only with dimness now.

"There is no need that you should feel anger at me," I told her gently. "My love never harmed you. It harmed no one save myself, and even to me it has brought great good. Do you think, Madonna Giulia, that I would have had it otherwise? I would rather suffer for your sake than be happy because I had never seen you. And I have known happy hours, too. Will you hate me if I tell you this? Well, I must take the risk, since I have sworn to tell the truth.

"Sometimes I lay by the camp fire at midnight and dreamed I was a great prince. and free to tell you of my love. Sometimes I pictured what I well knew could never be —what I would not have had be, for your sake. I dreamed that if you knew me, and learned to love me, out of the nobleness of your heart you might find the power to toss away rank and greatness and gladly give yourself to a poor soldier of fortune who stood alone save for his sword. I saw myself shield you and protect you, and make poverty so sweet a thing that you would never look back with longing to the days when you reigned a Princess. I saw you learn that want, sweetened by love, is far happier than state and power without it. I pictured us all alone, you and I, hand in hand, walking through life, well contented since we had each other. Was not that a foolish dream, Madonna Giulia? Yet it was so dear to me that I could not tear it from my heart!"

THE room was dark now, and I could see nothing but the dim outline of her form. She did not speak as I paused, and I was glad, for I had not dared to hope that she would hear my tale with so much patience.

"I had a third dream," I said slowly. "Sometimes I thought that, since I could never possess you, it would be the crown of my life if I might die in doing you some service. I was accustomed to hold this the most foolish of all my vain imaginings. And yet at last the time has come when I can serve you, and I do it gladly and proudly; and if I die in the enterprise, I will die in the most worthy act of all my life. First I must get you into safety, then I care not a jot what may come—it would be as well that my life should end with its best deed."

"End!" She breathed the word so softly that I hardly heard it.

"You will think," I said in a low voice, "that my love was a poor thing, since it made me no better than I was before. I raged against fate, and my anger drove me to many evil things, and day by day I made myself more and more unworthy of a glance from your eyes. In one short night I became another man. Since I have brought you here I have not been the mercenary who served Antonio della Scala at Verona. I have been an English knight once more."

In the pause there was a sound of stumbling steps outside, and Pierre came in from the gallery, bearing lights. The blackness of the room flamed suddenly into brightness, and I saw something that made my heart leap. Pierre set the candles down, then stood staring stupidly until I curtly bade him begone.

The Princess was lying back in her chair, her face hidden in her arms, her shoulders shaken. She was not angered at me for my presumption, not embittered at my daring —she was weeping as if her heart would break. What had I done to wound her? I cursed myself for a rough fool who had no place among women, and racked my brains for a way to soothe her.

"Are you weeping because you pity me, madonna?" I asked, thrilling with joy despite myself at the thought. "There is no need. God knows I had not meant to pain you! See you, although my love is mad and hopeless, it has done great good, for as long as I may live now I can never be again what I was a week ago."

She said nothing, and I crossed the room and fell on one knee beside her. "You have brought back the old Sir John Hawkwood, Princess," I said, "and I thank you, and am your servant for as long as my life shall last." I gently raised one of her hands from where it lay against the chair, and touched it to my lips. It had the chill of death.

"That is all," I said cheerfully, stepping back. "I thank you for your patient hearing, which will be a sweet memory to me in days to come, when I am far from you and may not see your face. Now I will tell you what chanced in Verona a few days since, and why I brought you here to save you from Antonio della Scala——"

"No, no, do not tell me! Ah, what matter now!"

The Princess had sprung up from her chair and was facing me, white as death, and with such terror and anguish in her eyes as made me cold with horror.

"What is it?" I cried. "What is it, madonna?"

"I did not know!" she cried pitifully, appealing to me as if for pardon. "I did not know—you never told me! Ah, why did I not hear you patiently on the first night you brought me here? Now it is too late, and there is no help——"

"What is it?" I cried again, frightened by the look of pale anguish in her face.

"They are coming!" she wailed, throwing her arm across her eyes. "They are coming! Within the hour they will be here!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SCARF WITH THE GOLD FLOWERS

FOR a moment I stood staring at her, too dazed for words. At last the meaning of her warning burst on my clouded wits, and I sprang forward and caught her by the hand. "Be calm, Madonna Giulia," I said quietly, though my blood was all on fire. "Do you mean that Antonio della Scala is coming here to-night?"

She uncovered her eyes and looked wildly at me, and the sight of her anguish moved me as the thought of danger could never have done. "Yes," she murmured, half inaudibly.

"But how can you know that? Who has told you?" I asked, in utter amazement.

"Madonna Violante," she answered, with tears of despair running down her cheeks. "She came here, and you let her see me, and together we formed the plot. You can do nothing, they will be here within the hour!"

In an instant all was clear to me. "Ah!" I cried, with a sudden sharp, unreasonable bitterness gnawing at my heart, "you plotted this with Madonna Violante—you told me nothing of it! You did not trust me ever so little, Princess, and yet I was freely risking my life to do you service!"

Every vestige of her pride and scorn had left her. She looked at me with the pale, desperate face of a suffering child. "I did not know that you loved me, that you wished to help me!" she wailed, her hands stretched out in prayer for pardon. "You had not told me this! I had heard you say that you would sell me to Francesco Carrara to fill your purse and the purses of your bravoes. Madonna Violante told me that I was not safe in your hands; she said that one day you would boast that——"

"Do you not know that Ranucio della Torre and his wife would lie away their souls if they could gain thereby? Do you trust them? Do you know me so little, when I have striven so hard to serve you?"

"You had not spoken then," she repeated drearily. "I did not know. Ah, what have I done, Sir John?"

"No great harm, save that by your mistrust you have hurt me," I answered, forcing myself to cheerfulness. "Let them come, they shall not get you! We will give Antonio della Scala such a welcome as will be little to his fancy!" I swung on my heel with a laugh, for the prospect of a fight was sweet to me.

She caught my arm. "Oh, you do not understand! They will not attack the castle walls!—they have a surer way to make their entrance! I have killed you, Sir John, when you were striving hard to serve me! All my life I shall have your blood on my hands and your death on my soul!"

A wild triumph filled me at the words, for now I saw that she trusted me. "Tell me all, madonna," I said. "Never fear, I will find a way to outwit them."

"You can not!" she moaned, and hid her face again. "Antonio knows this castle well. He knows the secret passage——"

"The passage!" My heart was beating faster.

"Yes, yes. There is an underground passage that crosses beneath the moat and opens through a moving block of stone in the castle store-room. They can enter it through a great hollow oak in the wood yonder. They will come and take you, and I have doomed you to certain death!" She looked at me with hopeless eyes.

"No matter, Madonna Giulia," I said cheerfully. "I have seen more desperate affairs than this. We will barricade the entrance to the passage——"

She shook her head with a moan. "It is too late! How can I tell you what I have done? I begged you to give me the freedom of the castle only that I might get speech with your men, and I bribed your fellow

Jacques—the soldier whom you beat the morning of the mutiny——"

"Yes," I said. "Go on, Princess." I knew now that the matter was desperate, but if my wild life had done me no other good it had at least given me the power of meeting danger with coolness, and my voice was calm and unhurried.

SHE looked at me in amazement. "Do you not understand?" she cried. "I have brought you to ruin! The man was eager for revenge. I bribed him with the jewels I wore and a promise of gold in the future, and he helped me."

"I understand," I answered. "What did he do? Tell me in as few words as may be."

"He has taken off the stones from the mouth of the passage and left it free for my cousin's men." she answered. "He has done what you can not repair by hours of work—and at any instant we may hear the cries of my cousin's men! They will kill you—they will cut you down before my eyes, or, worse, they will take you back to Verona and end your life by torture! Why do you not curse me, Sir John?"

She had taken my wild look for anger, and small blame to her. My calm was gone. Jacques had made an entrance for Antonio's men, and had ruined my scheme for the saving of Antonio's cousin. I could not hold the castle now; the Princess was doomed.

"Curse you, child?" I said at last, and my voice had a strange hoarse note that I had never heard in it before, but which I had heard in the voices of men who turned cowards at the pinch. The sound shamed me, and yet I swear I felt no fear for myself and took no thought for my own life. All my mind was set on her. "Why should I curse you? I am trying to devise a way to save you. This is a terrible thing that you have done so innocently! It will bring you great trouble——"

"To me?" the Princess cried, raising her face in a bewilderment that drowned her terror. "What harm can come to me? Are you mad, Sir John? I shall be safe among my own people; it is you that will be in the hands of your foes——"

"You do not understand," I said dully. "Can you not see that there were two plots woven about you? The day I carried you from the inn to the castle here, Gianni Potrero was hard upon my heels. He had been minded to do the same thing—and by the Prince's orders."

"The Prince's orders! And why?" she cried, staring.

"Because you would not wed him when he wooed you," I muttered, not thinking of what I said, only wondering how I was to save her. "He planned that you should be carried off by Gianni Potrero, who was to make pretense at holding you for ransom. Later you were to be rescued by the Prince, and he fancied that you would feel much gratitude, and admiration for him and listen more willingly to his suit. I overheard the plot in the palace *loggia*, and planned to save you by taking you to the Duke of Padua. Do you understand now?"

She did not answer me, and I turned to look at her, struck by her silence. She could have turned no whiter than she was before, but all her strength seemed gone, and she swayed and fell limply into her chair. She believed me—she took my statement without question, though it concerned her own cousin! Even in this desperate pass I felt a reckless triumph in the thought.

"Yes," she breathed, struggling hard for composure. "Yes, I understand at last. In an hour I shall be in Antonio della Scala's hands and at his mercy in this wild, lonely place! What will become of me when he finds that I have no gratitude for him, that I am not duped, that I fear and loathe him? Oh, always I have known that he was an evil man, though for the sake of our common blood I have struggled hard to think otherwise! And of late I have had a horror of him; when he wooed me the ghost of dead Bartolomeo rose between us; I fancied I saw blood upon his hands! He has sworn to wed me, and to-night I will be in his power!" She drew herself up with a gesture of desperate pride. Oh, I am ashamed, Sir John —I have ruined you and brought you to your death, and now I am cold with fear of my cousin and what may come to me when you are slain!"

I THINK as I might, rack my brains as much as I chose, I could plan nothing save to barricade the room into which the secret passage opened, and hold it as best I could; and this would prove efficacious only for a brief time. But now a new thought flashed into my head, and I wheeled to face the Princess with an exclamation of joy.

She misunderstood me. "You do not care what may come to me, then?" she cried bitterly. "It does not distress you that I shall fall into my cousin's power? Ah! then all this talk of love with which you entertained me a few moments since was but a cheat?"

"No, Princess," I answered quietly. "I love you, and it is for me to save you—and so I shall do, with God's help. Be calm now, waste no time in fear, for we shall be hard pressed to carry out my scheme before Antonio comes."

"You will save me?" she cried incredulously.

Voices and laughter came to us from without. Francesca and her Irish lover were returning from the battlements. A moment later they were in the room, and the laughter died on their lips as they gazed from the Princess' white face to my grim, set one.

"What's gone amiss, Sir John?" O'Meara cried, springing forward and catching me by the arm.

I laid my hand on his shoulder and drew him to me. "Michael," I said soberly, "you are the one friend I have in all the world. I have trusted you for years, though I trust no one else on earth. You would not refuse me anything on which my heart was set, would you, lad?"

He looked bewildered and somewhat emotional. "Faith, and I think you've got no need to ask that!" he answered, almost angrily. "It's ask and have, Sir John! Tell me to go to Verona and strike the Prince across the face, or to besiege the city walls all alone, and I'll not say no——"

"I am sure of that," I answered, keeping my hold on his shoulder. "But would you do something harder, Michael? Would you turn your back on a deadly fight for my sake, and ride for safety as fast as ever your horse could take you?"

The Irishman's expressive features twisted in an obvious struggle. "'Tis a deal to ask of any man, and above all of one of my country," he cried, "but, bedad, I love you so well I believe I'd be after doing even *that* if you asked it! But you'll not ask it, will you, Sir John, dear?" he pleaded, in manifest alarm.

"I must, Michael," I answered. He was staring at me now with his mouth fallen open. Francesca, conscious that an evil moment was upon us, had run to the Princess and put her arms about her. "Antonio della Scala is to come here within the hour, and will enter by a secret passage that runs beneath the moat. We can not resist him, therefore we must not let him find the Princess here. I had meant, as you know, to remain here until a strong troop of Florentines might escort Madonna Giulia safely across the Paduan boundaries, but since this is impossible you must take her to-night—at once. You shall have twenty men; it is not a great number, but I can do nothing better for you. Ride as if the devil were at your heels, cut through any obstacles that cross your way, never draw rein for an instant till you reach Padua and Duke Francesco!"

"And what of yourself meanwhile, Sir John?" said O'Meara, in a very low voice.

"Oh, I shall have plenty to do, never doubt it," I answered cheerfully. "I will remain here and hold the castle as long as may be against the Prince, that he may believe Madonna Giulia is still here and make no move to pursue her. That should give you a safe start."

"YES, we should get away safely," said O'Meara, vaguely and indifferently, as if he cared little whether they did or not. "But you? 'Tis signing your own death-warrant you are——"

"Hush!" I whispered fiercely, with a glance at the Princess. He broke off and stood silent, very pale, biting at his lip. I went over to Madonna Francesca and spoke to her gently. "Madonna, you can help us greatly in this matter if you choose. Are you brave enough to run some risk for the sake of your lady?"

She looked at me in a bewildered fashion. "I do not understand," she murmured. "The Princess is in no danger—what harm can come to her through falling into her cousin's hands? It is what she desires——"

"No, no, child!" cried the Princess desperately. "I have been tricked, I have been duped by the Prince! It was his plan to have me brought here that he might force me into marriage with him. Sir John heard the plot and did all that a true knight could to save me, and in my madness I have ruined him! If Antonio takes me now, the Virgin help me!"

"Will you aid us in saving your lady?" I asked Francesca again.

She drew away from the Princess and

stood erect, her pale face raised. "I am not brave, and I am very foolish and featherheaded," she answered, with a pitiful little effort at mirth, "but I would gladly give my life for Madonna Giulia! Tell me how I may help her and you shall have no cause to call me coward."

"Then you must stay here in the castle while she leaves us," I answered. "O'Meara, go get your men to horse! Choose out the most evil and greedy of the troop—the ones who would be most like to fail me when they found the pinch a hopeless one; in that way I shall have the stancher men left for the holding of the castle, and you will have no trouble, for those who ride with you will look for a rich reward in Padua."

He hesitated, looking at me uncertainly. "I've said I'd leave you, and I'll be keeping my word, though it hurts me near beyond all bearing to do it," he said, coming close to me. "But Madonna Francesca there, Sir John? Sure, and death is all in the day's work for us men, but what of a sweet little girl like that who never has looked on a drop of blood and never should? Have we got the right to bring her into peril?"

She had heard him, and even at this moment a faint smile played about her mouth. "I shall not be in great danger, Messer O'Meara," she said prettily, coming up and laying her fingers on his arm. "Prince Antonio will not dare do me any serious evil, no matter how far I enrage him. My family is poor now, but we have kinsmen who are powerful, and all Verona would cry out if harm came to me. Never fear! But I would—I would——" She broke off with tears filling her eyes.

"What then, mavourneen?" he cried passionately.

"I would," she repeated, between tears and laughter, "that you were not going, Messer O'Meara! You must find means to come back to Verona some day, for if I should never see you again——"

"Yes? Yes? Tell me, then?" he urged eagerly.

"I would find me a convent!" she answered, sobbing and laughing at one and the same time. "For I will be a nun, I vow it, before my Lord Ravignani shall call me wife, or any other noble of Verona, or any man on earth save—save——"

It was here that O'Meara forgot all the world in his rapture and caught her in his arms and covered her face with kisses. She clung to him, laughing joyfully through her tears, as pretty a picture as I had ever seen; and though I well knew that every moment was precious to me, I had not the heart to interrupt the brief heaven of these two who might never meet again on earth.

"SIR JOHN HAWKWOOD," said the Princess' voice in my ear. She was standing close beside me, pale and tense, but very composed. "I will not go!" she said, and with an accent of finality that chilled me. "I have caused all this by my own fault. I shall stay, and share the evil that is coming. That is the only reparation I can make you now!"

The other two were oblivious to us, and did not see that I bent and took both the Princess' hands in mine. "You speak like a great lady and a brave woman," I answered, "but you are wrong. There is a greater reparation than that which you can make me. Whether you stay or go, my death is certain; but it rests with you whether I die in all content, having redeemed my spotted life in some part, or whether I die with all my sins uncleansed and my heart in a tumult of despair. Go—let me feel that I have saved you, that I have not lived in vain. You will let me die in peace, Madonna Giulia? I have tried to serve you, I have risked all in your behalf, and this is my first and last prayer, the only thing that I shall ever ask you."

She was silent for a long moment, and I saw that there were heavy tears on her lashes. "Yes, I will go," she said at last, very softly.

"I thank you, Princess." I could say no more than that in a steady voice.

She raised her eyes to mine, and they had a wonderful star-like look. "Do you remember, Sir John," she said, "that one day in the palace *loggia*—it was the afternoon when you would have warned me of my cousin, and I would not listen—you took my scarf? Have you it now?"

"Yes," I answered, in amazement.

"Then give it to me," she said.

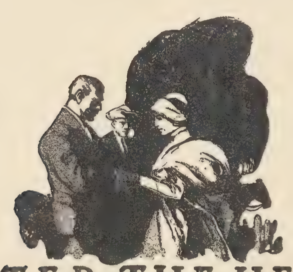
"You desire it?" I asked, with a keen stab of pain at my heart. "I was unworthy of it when I took it, true—but am I all unworthy now? May I not keep it until the end, the end which will soon be here?"

She shook her head and held out her hand. Slowly, biting my lips to keep down the pain, I drew the soft, gold-embroidered thing from the breast of my doublet and gave it to her. She took it, and now I saw that she was smiling in a wonderful fashion such as I had never before seen on the lips of any woman, it was at once so sweet and so sad.

"You are the only man who has ever served me for my own sake and for no object of his own," she said softly. "You are the truest knight I have ever known, Sir John!" And with her own hands she passed the scarf across my shoulder and knotted it over my bright cuirass.

For a moment I could find no words, nor any power to speak them. Coming to myself at last, I went on one knee and kissed her hand. "Princess," I said, my voice quavering in a womanish fashion, for which I felt no shame at all, "you have given me back my knighthood, and I ask no greater joy or honor than to die for you!"

TO BE CONCLUDED



ENTER, THE HERO

BY RUTH COMFORT MITCHELL

DOWN through the endless miles of *maguey* fields, gray-green and dusty under the glare of the hard turquoise sky, past huddled brown villages, leaving the Pyramids behind and picking up the faint silhouette of Mt. Orizaba on the horizon, swaying, lurching, the Vera Cruz train sped eastward, Mr. Gelbhauser's new private car "Dianthe" playing "snap-the-whip" on the end.

Young Tommy Jerrolds, who had been asked only to play with the Levering girls, and hadn't said ten words to them since they left Los Angeles, held his usual point of vantage beside Miss Millard, reveling alike in her favor and the scowls of Herman Gelbhauser, Jr., who regarded him wrathfully from across the aisle. The boy stooped to rescue the book which slipped from her lap to the floor. "That's five times in half an hour! Must be studying hard!"

Miss Millard nodded her thanks without turning her gaze from the window. "I'm too busy, Tommy."

"Heavens!" he protested, "What can you see in this endless *pulque*-patch? Miles upon miles of smiles, acres of mornings after——"

She shook her head impatiently. "Oh, not this, especially, but all of it—the country—the people—the air—I can't explain it!"

Her host leaned toward her, his broad face beaming. "I'm delighted that you are enjoying yourself, Miss Millard. There is, indeed, much of interest—to one capable of appreciating it."

"Whew, I guess that cut!" said young Tommy cheerfully. "But leave your sceneless scenery long anough to do your Spanish, Miss Di! Come on—we'd gone as far as 'What does Your Honor's Papa want?' 'He wants the soap,' and 'The young lady needs the silk handkerchief of the Frenchman'—(careless young lady!) Now then; '*Qué necesita la*——"

"Mr. Gelbhauser, you'll have to come and play the rubber with me!" called a cross voice from the other end of the car. "Jim's asleep again!"

Herman Gelbhauser rose reluctantly, and Miss Millard turned to the boy with a quick whisper. "Tommy, you *mustn't!*"

"Well, you know you don't want——" he began defensively, but she cut him short. "*Sh!* Do go and talk to the girls!"

"Oh, they're busy!" He looked over his shoulder to where the Misses Levering lolled in their chairs and jabbed vicious eyelets in their embroidery. "Look here, it's none of my business, but I know you're not strong for Hermie! You *can't* be!" His freckled face flushed hotly. "You're so beautiful and keen, you're there a *million;* and what's he, besides the old codger's son?" he nodded to the farthest corner of the car where a little old man with a handkerchief over his head snored gently.

Miss Millard's lip curled. "Vulgarly speaking, Tommy, *he's* 'there a million'—several of them."

"Don't!" said the boy sharply. "It isn't like you."

She squared herself to the window, her elbows on the sill, and watched the sliding picture with somber eyes. "I don't see why you think anything that's sordid and calculating and mean is unlike me. It's all I've known."

"Well, it's not!" doggedly. "And it makes me hot to have that bunch down there talking you over, saying you'll make up your mind on this trip whether it's to be Hermie or Chase!"

A slow blush spread over Diana Millard's beautiful face from chin to brow. "I don't know why I let you talk to me like this."

Young Tommy moved closer. "I'll tell you. Because you know I'm only a kid, and out of the running, and because I—I understand, and know you're the sweetest, finest—well, you are, and it makes me sick to hear them betting it'll be Chase, because his pictures are the rage, or Hermie, with his imitation polish and the old man's money—and the car that he named for you as near as he dared!"

From the group at the other end came the acid aftermath: "Well, naturally, when I led you the ten!"—"Make up your own signals as you go along, don't you?" A man pushed his chair back noisily, and flung himself out on to the platform, banging the door behind him.

"Hermie's car," said the boy softly, "full of sweet, jolly, congenial people who like him for himself alone! Miss Di——" The train jarred to a standstill with a great flurry of whistles and bells, and the occupants of the "Dianthe" sprang to their feet in welcoming haste.

Miss Millard stood on the lowest step and let the rest clamber past her,watching them merge into the stream of Pullman passengers who rushed to the venders of *dulces* and *tortillas*, and the shacks of the Mexicans.

"Not going to mingle?" asked Derwent Chase, joining her.

"No," said the girl disgustedly. "Look at them, crowding into their huts, stepping on the dogs, snatching up the babies, peeking into the kettles, laughing at them—ugh! *We're* the barbarians!"

She looked over the snarl of people on the platform to the rolling brown country where a dusty road led away to the dimpling hills. Four oxen plodded toward them, drawing a crude, two-wheeled cart piled high with golden hay, their great heads pushed forward under the heavy beam bound to their horns. Beside them pattered a *peon*, all in dingy white, save for his yellow *sombrero* and the scarlet band at his waist. A pair of forlorn minstrels, a blind man steered by a little, lame old woman, wormed their way through the crowd and halted before Diana, wailing a mournful ballad to the thin strumming of the man's guitar.

Young Jerrolds hurried back to his post. "Some class, isn't it?" he grinned. "Looks like a stage setting—all the scenery and the chorus, and—by Jiminy, look! There in the station door—'Enter the Hero!'"

STANDING in the low doorway, like a picture too large for its frame, was a tall man in well worn English riding-clothes, his fresh coloring and the fair hair under his canvas helmet in striking contrast to the dusky faces about him. He stood for a moment looking with frank curiosity at the tourists thronging the platform, his blue eyes resting for a permissible second on Miss Millard, then swung past them and boarded the car ahead.

"Say, me for him, strong!" cried Tommy warmly. "Kind of a cross between the 'Brushwood Boy' and that fellow in 'Soldiers of Fortune'! By golly, I bet that chap knows lots about this country! I'm going to talk to him! See you next station!" he raced down the platform as the train began to move, and jumped on the steps of the Pullman.

"I dare say you can spare the Infant Class?" laughed Chase, as he took Tommy's seat.

The train had hardly slowed down for the next town when the boy rushed back to the "Dianthe." "Say, Mr. Gelbhauser, there's a mighty interesting fellow in there—think you'd all enjoy him. Can I bring him in?"

Herman, Jr., considered ponderously. "That will be as the ladies of the party wish," he said, looking only at Miss Millard.

Diana looked at the boy's eager face, and then smiled at her host: "It might be very pleasant."

"Tell your friend—if you're sure, of course, that he's a proper sort of person—that we'll be pleased to have him join us for tea," said Mr. Gelbhauser graciously, and Tommy dashed off to return with his discovery in tow.

He was one Edgar Blythe-Masterson, it seemed, late of England, and now in charge of an extensive sugar *hacienda* near Córdoba. The "Dianthe's" party in the main fell upon him with the cordiality born of much boredom, and he took their tea and cakes and their advances with frank appetite. Tommy, curled into an incredibly small space on the floor that he might be near his divinity, listened rapturously, looking up at her for approval when the Englishman, in answer to the queries of the other men, told of crops and conditions and politics and, by reason of quaint diction and much ingenuous earnestness, infused the simplest statement with color and warmth.

"Then it isn't all poppycock, this revolution story?" asked Chase. "There's always danger of an outbreak?"

Tommy saw Diana's dark eyes traveling consideringly from the newcomer to Herman Gelbhauser, much too carefully dressed and mannered; to Chase, weary-eyed and much too clever; to the other men of the group, modifications of the two types.

"Well, rather!" the Englishman answered with a laugh. "Down here in the *tierra caliente* things are always simmering, d'you see?—and the lid's just about due to fly off again. There's a charcoal-burner, a sort of half-witted chap—Florenzio something-or-other—who thinks he's had visions, and they've been rioting all over the shop, with him at their head. Oh, there'll be nothing big, you know—the Government will be down on them like a shot before they're fairly started, and stand a hundred of 'em against a wall and snuff out the revolution with a few volleys, and the vision chap will be packed off to San Juan de Ulúa—the very unpleasant island prison you'll see in the harbor of Vera Cruz—to rot out his life in a cell where the water's knee-deep at high tide, and——"

"Nevertheless," Gelbhauser cut in with authority, "it's generally conceded that the Government is most excellent, and that Diaz has redeemed Mexico from a nation of savages."

"Granted," said Blythe-Masterson pleasantly. "He's a Napoleon, of a sort, is Diaz, and he's worked nothing short of a miracle with the crude stuff he took hold of, but—" he hesitated, "you can't have omelette without breaking eggs, and there's always the other view-point. And so long as there are fellows who think it a glorious privilege to get themselves shot or sealed up alive for the sake of 'Libertad,' we'll be having revolutions!"

"But, my gracious, Mr. Blythe-Masterson," chirped the elder Miss Levering, "isn't it dangerous, living in such a wild country?"

"Oh, of course, there's always the off chance that some misguided patriot will pot you on general principles, but I rub along very comfortably. Y' see, I've tucked away a run-away *enganchador* or two—contract laborers, you know—and the beggars know I've a leaning to their side."

"Does your company like to have you risk antagonizing the Government?" asked Herman, Jr.

"My—oh, I'm for myself, you see. Yes, it makes it rather jolly. I shouldn't like being accountable. My word, here's Orizaba, and I'm getting off here! I've enjoyed meeting you no end! You'll be staying over in Córdoba, of course, and you'll all come out to the *hacienda* for tea? Or—better still—stop the night? That *would* be jolly! I've a goodish bit of room, for I'm expecting the people from home over this year, and I can perfectly well put you up. I'll call it a promise, then?"

He stood with his hand on young Tommy's shoulder, his cheery glance running over the languid group till it rested eagerly on Miss Millard.

"Good-by, then, for a bit—Beg pardon? You're having the car cut off here? You're staying over in Orizaba? Oh, I say, what luck!" he dropped into his chair again with frank delight.

AND so it fell out that when the "Dianthe" started on the wonderful drop from Orizaba to Córdoba three days later, on a marvelous green and gold morning, it was the Englishman who sat beside Miss Millard on the observation platform, Tommy standing guard close by, and Messrs. Gelbhauser and Chase hovering unhappily in the middle distance. The boy managed to whisper in her ear: "Guess I'm *poor* as a discoverer—T. Columbus Jerrolds, please write!" And Diana blushed "the blushiest blush you ever saw," Tommy wrote his mother afterwards, "and there your Angel Son sat, playing the Human Barbed Wire Fence, listening to scraps like—'And so you've been in Surrey,' (*beeen*, Mumsie!) 'almost in sight of my home! Only fancy!'—and Chase and Hermie thirsting for my gore!"

All too soon there was Córdoba smiling up at them, and then Córdoba station, with the villagers drawn up to meet the train for all the world like a comic-opera chorus, and a slim Mexican with Chesterfieldian manners riding a dancing horse and leading another to meet Blythe-Masterson, who called a hearty "Hello, Romaldo! How are you?"

"Señor," replied Romaldo with a glittering smile, with great difficulty removing his *sombrero* and restraining both horses, "I am your Honor's servant who kisses your hands, and all is well at Las Golondrinas!"

They watched the Englishman mount and ride away, the elegant Romaldo falling correctly behind, but his master pulled up sharply at a shrill cry, leaning down to greet a droll little row lined up to meet him. There were two tiny boys, almost eclipsed by *sombreros*, and three small girls with heads sedately covered by *rebosas*, the youngest sucking a bashful finger. He leaned gravely down to shake each one by the hand, rummaged in his pocket for a parcel of *dulces*, waved again to the "Dianthe" and clattered off down the sunny street.

Mr. Gelbhauser's party climbed on the mule-car which runs between the station and the town and were jolted through avenues of tropical trees, past the clamor of the market-place, beside the gay plaza with the old cathedral on its edge, into the heart of the *tierra caliente*.

"Wonder which way his *hacienda* is?" said Tommy. "Will we go out to-day or to-morrow?"

"I don't know that we will go either to-day or to-morrow," answered his host crisply. "We are probably capable of entertaining ourselves during our brief stay. There seems nothing to see—besides the laziest set of idlers we've seen yet!"

"That fellow frivoling away his time with the Saratoga, for instance?" asked Tommy sweetly, pointing to a slender youth with a heavy trunk slung on his back and a basket in his hands. "Or his friend loafing along behind with the four suit-cases and the two satchels?"

"The gentleman transplanting the boiler seems to be rather busy, too," laughed Chase, nodding toward an *aguador*, trotting briskly under his enormous water-jar, and Herman, Jr., joined grudgingly in the laugh.

Perhaps it was the aftermath of that irritation that held him in its grip in the delicious cool of the evening, as they strolled back from the concert in the Alameda, when not even Diana's face under a pale blue *rebosa* could light his gloom. Nor could the excellent supper the porters had set out in the "Dianthe," for he stood moodily apart while the others ate, hinting darkly of an early morning departure. A crowd—some who had been listening to the concert and others who had swelled the number—came swarming down to the station, singing and shouting, and halted near the car.

"I wonder if our friends are merely out for the air, or if this is a rally?" said Chase. "Looks rather promising."

The crowd swayed nearer, gesticulating

and pointing to the windows of the "Dianthe."

"Oh, please," cried the younger Miss Levering timidly, "mayn't we have the shades down?"

"I see no reason why," said Gelbhauser sourly.

"Isn't it just possible," said Diana dryly, "that the sight of us at our fifth meal may be a little irritating to people who may have difficulty in getting two?"

His heavy face flushed unpleasantly. "You've become inoculated with British-Mexican Socialism, I see, but I shall pay no attention to them. It is not our affair if they choose the vicinity of our car for their meeting."

"Revolution, run away, Come again some other day, Little Hermie wants to play!" chanted Tommy softly, and the Misses Levering giggled nervously. Gelbhauser, who had caught the drift, wheeled on the boy with his face stormy, but a stone whizzed through the window, grazing his cheek and just breaking the skin.

"That settles it!" he shouted, running into his state-room, while a pocket edition of pandemonium reigned in the car, and returning with his revolver.

"Gelbhauser, are you crazy?" cried Chase, springing at him. "What——"

"I'll show you!" he screamed furiously. "I'll show you how to deal with these cattle!" Shaking off the restraining hand he fired into the crowd. There was a cry of rage and pain, and then all that had gone before in the way of noise became as the calm of a Summer day—shrieks, curses, a fusillade of stones, a knife which gleamed past Diana and imbedded itself in the wall.

Chase and Tommy sprang to the doors, calling to the rest to pull the shades, and the members of the "Dianthe's" party looked at each other in pallid silence while the menacing roar grew louder. Then, suddenly, a new note was added to the tumult —a shout which sent the color flooding back into Miss Millard's white face. "I knew he would come for us!" she said, with a little laugh, and Tommy threw open the door to admit Blythe-Masterson, breathless and imperative.

"Quick!" he gasped. "You'll have to run for it! I heard they were meeting, and hurried to ——" He looked at the pistol in Gelbhauser's limp hand. "You had the bad luck to wing Florenzio—the vision-chap, and there's the deuce to pay! Get the women out of the window on that side—it's dark—Romaldo's there—he'll take you to the *hacienda!* Quick, I say! I'll stand them off here till you get a bit of a start!"

Tommy and Chase had flown to obey him as he spoke, but Herman, Jr., brandished his pistol hysterically. "Am I to abandon my car to these savages?"

"Man alive!" shouted the Englishman, "I'll do my best to save your car, but I'm trying to save your skin! Quick, I tell you!" He opened the door and shouted something in Spanish to the mob, then slammed it again and ran to Tommy and caught his arm. "I say, you'll look after her?"

"Bet your neck!" said the boy briefly, and Blythe-Masterson went out on the platform and shut the door behind him.

THE elegant Romaldo was receiving the limp and terrified ladies from the arms of Tommy and Chase, and when they were all on the ground he pointed to the left, motioned for silence, and set off through the dark at a run, the Americans stumbling after him. Diana had been the last to be lifted down, and she clutched Tommy's hand and hung back.

"What will they do to him?" she whispered fiercely. "We can't——"

"Come along!" said Tommy importantly. "He told me to take care of you!"

Diana stood still. "Tommy, did he, honestly? When? What did he say?"

"Come on!" panted the boy, pulling her. "Do you think this is a pink tea? Hurry!" From the other side of the car they could hear the Englishman's voice in earnest expostulation, and the yells and hisses of the crowd.

"Tommy, they'll kill him! We *can't* leave——"

"Now you've done it! They're coming round! Pull that thing over your face. *Sh!* Back into the shadow!"

A section of the crowd swayed round the end of the car, and Tommy dragged Miss Millard deeper into the shade, creeping beside the car to the end of it, then stumbling and pushing through the friendly dark, jostled by the mob, which was breaking and surging to all sides. They made a spurt to a freight-car, and leaned against it, gasping.

"*Sh!*" breathed Tommy. "If anybody

comes near, say something Spanish—anything!"

"I c-can't think of anything but the soap, or the silk handkerchief of the Frenchman!" she whispered wildly. "Oh, Tommy, they're coming this way!"

They ran on again, Tommy pulling and urging. "Run! *Run!* Didn't you ever play basket-ball? Didn't you ever play tag? Faster!"

On through the soft, murky darkness, away from the station and the lights, till the sound of the voices grew faint and died away, and Miss Millard sank down in rebellion. "Not—another—inch—Tommy! Oh, if I ever—breathe again!"

"And now we're lost, like the Babes in the Wood," said Tommy.

"Never mind," said Diana, breathless but serene, "he'll come for us! He'll find us!"

Tommy found breath to whistle "Rule Brittania;" and he whistled it again, an hour later, when he heard a galloping horse.

"My word, I'm glad to find you! I've been scouring the jungle!" The Englishman had flung himself off and was holding both Miss Millard's hands. "You're safe? You're quite sure you're not hurt?" Then reproachfully, to Tommy, "You promised me you'd look after her!"

"Well, she——" began the boy, but a frantic cough from Diana checked him. "We were slow in getting started, and the mob cut us off from the rest. Then we beat it—my friend, Miss Diana of the chase, and me, and——"

"You shall ride my horse," Blythe-Masterson said to Miss Millard, "and Jerrolds and I will walk beside you. I didn't want to alarm the others when I saw you were not with them at the *hacienda*, and I told them you were safe at the hotel, so they haven't been worrying."

They set off through the velvet blackness of the night, Tommy limping wearily and considerately in the rear, and Romaldo met them at the gate of Las Golondrinas.

"Señor," he said, "I am your Honor's servant who kisses your hands, and your guests are all sleeping, save only the fat señor, who wails for his car."

Diana was given a steamer chair in the fragrant *patio*, and the wife of Romaldo summoned to attend her. She was also, it appeared, the señor's servant who kissed his hands, and the chief of her joys was rising at one o'clock to prepare chocolate for beautiful and famished young ladies. After that she showed Miss Millard to her room.

AND it seemed hardly an hour after her soft "*Buenas noches*" that she was saying "Buenos dias" beside the bed, with another cup of steaming chocolate. Diana hurried down to the *patio*, and found the "Dianthe's" party assembled, weary-eyed and much subdued.

"It seems beastly inhospitable to speed your going this way," said their host unhappily, "but I know you'll feel more comfortable when you've put a good bit of country between you and your adventures of last night. I got them to take your car down to Vera Cruz on the midnight freight. Romaldo will drive you to Atoyac, where you'll catch the train. I—I'm no end sorry to hurry you." He led the way to the gate, where the four-horse stage and three saddle-horses were waiting, and helped the women in.

Diana, dazed and wondering, leaned down to speak to him. "You—you are coming with us?"

"Unfortunately, no. I—er—I have things to look after here—things to be attended to at once. It's beastly luck, but I can't possibly leave the ranch this morning. Romaldo, one moment!"

Miss Millard, watching in utter bewilderment, saw him slip a folded paper into the Mexican's hand and whisper to him earnestly. Then Romaldo leaped to the driver's seat, cracked his long whip, and they were off in a cloud of golden dust.

Young Tommy's hand found hers under the robe as he ran his horse close beside when they slowed down for a turn. "I don't know *how*," he whispered, "but Hermie did it! He was with him half an hour, before the rest came down, and—you saw Blythe-Masterson's face! Shall I slay Hermie at once or reserve him for torture?"

She pulled her thick veil down over her face and leaned back in the corner of the seat in silence, careless of the close-clipped smiles of the Levering girls and the hard fun in Chase's eyes. Five little days, then, was to be the sum of it all! The "Dianthe" was waiting; Herman, Jr., was waiting; life, as she had known it, was waiting. A brisk, fresh wind had swept through the hot-house, revealing it, cleansing it, but the door was shut now, and the air was danker than ever—spent, stale, heavy with forced blooms.

Gelbhauser, thudding solidly on his slim mount, reined in beside her, a chastened cheer on his wide face. "All's well that ends well, eh, Miss Millard? I'm sorry I was so upset last night. I hope I don't have to explain to *you* that it wasn't the broken window. It was the principle of the thing. By the way, Collier will be in town the night we get in, and I want to consult you about a little party——"

IN SPITE of the multiplicity of cares which kept him at home, the master of Las Golondrinas spent the morning on his upper veranda, like Sister Anne, watching every cloud of dust, and Romaldo found him waiting at the gate.

"Señor," he said, "I am your——"

"Did you give her the note, Romaldo?"

"But surely, señor, and she has read it, two times, and three. And the young señor has laughed out with a great gladness, and torn a leaf from his book, and held his hat for her to write upon, and the fat señor has looked evilly upon——"

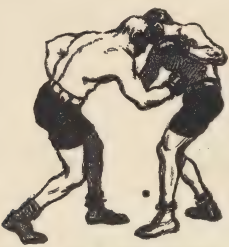
"Where is it?"

Romaldo had never seen his revered employer grab before. The revered employer also read two times and three.

—but I am not, *not*, NOT engaged to him, and I never—

"Señor," said Romaldo, politely and patiently, "I am your Honor's servant who——"

"Saddles my horse!" cried his master. "And gets a month's wages if I make the two-ten for Vera Cruz!"



THE FIGHT OF PATSY McGLYNN

BY EDWARD ALEXANDER PHILLIPS

AS A STEP sounded at the street door the Widow McGlynn glanced significantly at her daughter, and the two, as though acting upon a signal, jerked the corners of their aprons to their moist eyes and assumed an air of cheerfulness. But rapid as the change had been, it did not escape the quick eye of the powerfully built young man who suddenly appeared in the doorway and now sent his searching, half-accusing gaze from one to the other.

"Crying again, eh?" he challenged, more in deprecation of a foolish habit than in unkindness toward those who indulged it. "Well, I suppose it does women-folks good.

I've heard so. But you mustn't cry any more to-night, mother. See what I've brought you—a brand new five-dollar gold-piece!"

The widow took the coin, slipped it in her bosom and disappeared from mortal sight into the yawning chasm formed by her big boy's outstretched arms and expansive chest. Held thus for a full minute in total eclipse, the world must ever remain in ignorance as to how she would have interpreted the series of astonishing facial contortions with which the young giant now favored his staring sister. Nor was that rattled young woman herself able to guess what was intended to be conveyed to her by the volley of cumbrous winks, smirks and grins which came her way. There was something so ridiculous in the pantomime, with its impromptu setting, that she laughed outright—and was sorry in a second, as a fierce frown of disapproval darkened her brother's face. In apparent disgust at her dullness, he jerked his head toward the door by which he had just entered and—released his prisoner.

"Patsy, you're a regular old grizzly bear!" gasped the smiling old mother, now restored to the best of humor. "You nearly smothered me, so you did; you're that strong! Where's Annie?"

"Stepped across to the Morrissy's—back in a minute. And while you're fixing us a bite to eat, mother, I'll drop down to the corner and see if there is any news from the factory."

A few minutes before filled with apprehension of the calamity she felt must speedily come upon the little family, the widow now moved with sprightly step about the narrow kitchen, humming an air to the accompanying rattle of pots and pans—an air that came faith-full and hope-laden from the heart and dissipated every fear. Such are mothers of big boys.

To be sure the boiler-factory had been closed for months, keeping Patsy out of work. The coal-man was importunate. The grocer refused further supplies. The rent-collector had threatened to put them out. For the past few weeks Patsy had earned varying sums at some training-quarters across the Bay, where he had assisted in preparing certain athletes for certain coming contests—she didn't know what. She only hoped he was not mixing up with prize-fights and those terrible prize-fighters. Anything but that!

Her son's small and irregular earnings had been far from adequate. Troubles seemed to be coming from every direction, threatening to culminate all at once. During the long day, when her son was away, she simply could not avoid the dreadful picture of hurrying disaster. Human reason refused to justify any hope of escape. There was no avoiding the inevitable. How was it that, in face of the coming calamity, Patsy managed to remain cheerful? She couldn't understand it; yet she was forced to admit that it was no more strange than the regular disappearance of her own fearful apprehensions when night brought him rollicking home and stood him there in the center of the little sitting-room, his great arms spread out, like the wings of some gigantic bat, inviting her to the enjoyment of her regular evening "smother."

But even the training-club employment was now at an end. Patsy had said so himself when he gave her that five-dollar piece, bidding her make the most of it. Matters were thus worse than ever. Still she hummed that air. Fear had flown. Hope was in her heart. Why?

"NOW, you look here, Sis," commanded Patsy McGlynn, towering over his sister Annie in the half-light of the areaway before their little flat, "You look here!"

"I'm looking," said the girl, squaring herself in mock belligerency.

"I want advice," he announced curtly.

"Well, sir, you've come to the right shop. What seems to be the nature of your trouble?"

"No josh—this is serious. I want advice, but it has to be advice with a string to it."

"Advice with a strin—what do you mean?"

"I mean I want you to give me the advice I tell you to give me. Are you game?"

"Game? You know I'm game. State your case."

"It's like this. You know that fellow Mike Doolan I've been training for the heavyweight fight Friday night? Well, he's supposed to be the hardest proposition the Coast has ever turned out. They had to go to Australia to get a man to lick him—Jack Farnum. Even at that, the betting is ten to seven, with Doolan the favorite, which shows how the 'insiders' feel about it. Now, you listen to what I'm saying, for I wouldn't say it to any one else on earth—without your advice.

"Doolan first hired me to wrestle with him, because I'm husky and heavy and he needed a lot of hauling about to prepare him for work in the clinches. He got all the hauling he wanted, all right. Well, the third day after I began work one of his sparring partners failed to show up and I was asked to spar with him for four rounds. At the end of the bout he called me into his dressing-room and offered me the job of boxing with him at odd times up to the date of the fight. He said, though I was young, I had speed and, as that was the main thing he had to overcome in Farnum, I was just the kid he needed to make him extend himself. He didn't want me to do any leading, he said—only to block his leads and counter lightly when I saw an opening.

"Look at me, Sis. I hadn't boxed with that fellow three times before I knew I could hit him when and where I pleased! More than that, I knew I was faster, could hit harder and that he couldn't put a glove on me in a week, if I didn't want him to. And here's another thing—a couple of 'em: I knew that he knew I was at least his equal at all points of the game, and I knew that he knew that I knew it. Follow me?

"Now, make a note of this: I never did extend myself boxing with Doolan. Mother needed that five-spot the 'great heavyweight' was paying me for each set-to, and I couldn't afford to lose the job. So, while he couldn't have helped knowing I was as good at the game as he was, he didn't know what an easy mark he'd be for me if it came to a real 'go.'

"Now, I've not told any one these things. It would sound like boasting, and I've no ambition to be a fighter. Only you and I are 'wise,' for, though a good many witnessed our bouts, I carefully followed my boss's instructions, working always on the defensive and keeping the sting out of my leads, counters and swings.

"We boxed the last bout this afternoon, and, when we got through, Doolan took me into his private room and offered me $250 to second him at Friday night's fight. I told him how mother and you feel about prize-fighting, but he said he could arrange it so I could serve under an assumed name. That $250 looked mighty juicy, the way things are with us, Sis, and I finally agreed to act as Doolan's second.

"Then something happened that just about knocked me clean silly. What do you suppose that alleged sport told me? That Friday night's fight was fixed! Sure—a fake! Doolan was to foul Farnum in the eighth round, and I was to admit the claim when Farnum's second made it. That's as far as he got with my instructions when a gang of newspaper men and others broke into the room and my boss shook me by the hand and said we'd go further into the details to-morrow. So you see, Sis, this brace of pug highwaymen propose on next Friday night to steal between thirty thousand and forty thousand dollars from the Califrisco Club, which is promoting the contest, and the public, which is always ready to encourage legitimate sport with its good hard money. And your fair-haired brother is supposed to be in with the robbery! What do you think of it?"

"I think it's a shame and a scand——"

"Hold! Here's where I test your gameness. You know I'd rather have my head cut off than betray the confidence of a decent man, don't you?"

"Certainly I know it."

"Well, this is the first time I've been honored with the confidence of a thieving scrub. I want you to advise me to go to Mr. Fulmer, president of the club, and explain the whole situation."

"That's easy. I advise it."

"And, after that, I want you to advise me to do what I think best for all concerned."

"But, what——"

"No 'buts.' Be game! I want you to advise it."

"Well—er—g-go ahead."

"Good. Now, you wouldn't throw a man down for doing what you advise him to do, would you?"

"Why, no—that is—certainly not."

"Then, when I get through doing what you have advised me to do, I want you to stand up, like a thoroughbred, and tell mother that I did it at your suggestion."

"But—you—you——"

"Are you a quitter?"

"N-no—but I——"

"Be game, Sis! Will you stick?"

"Y-e-es."

"Then come on. Mother's waiting."

II

PATSY McGLYNN stepped from the side door of President Fulmer's residence and hurried down the street. Three blocks away he slackened his pace and walked leisurely in the direction of the ferry. "I don't want to get over there ahead of the old man," he said, "so I'll mosey along, easy like."

It was mid-afternoon when the young athlete sauntered up to the training-quarters. A big crowd was about the place and the sports, reporters, photographers and others, who had come to see the noted heavyweight don the gloves for the last time before the great fight, were voicing their disappointment at Doolan's announcement that he would box no more until he faced Farnum in the ring, two days hence. Accidents, he had explained, were likely to happen. He might injure his hands, or strain a tendon. The event was the most important in his career and he couldn't afford to take chances. He was in perfect condition for the fight of his life. His friends and backers would have to excuse him.

The disgusted visitors growled and moved away to catch their train back to the city. Only a few remained, and of this number Patsy noticed, without surprise, President Fulmer, the treasurer and two of the club directors. They were talking to Doolan who, now appearing for the first time to notice the presence of his late sparring partner, called him up and introduced him to the distinguished visitors. Patsy was glad to meet the gentlemen, especially the famous Mr. Fulmer, of whom he had heard so much—though he had pictured him a much older man, he said.

"I got that crowd out of the way on purpose," explained the pugilist. "These gentlemen want to see me in action. Get your ring clothes on, Patsy. We'll box four rounds for 'em. It's only a——"

"I'll tell you what we want, McGlynn," broke in the pompous president, taking matters into his own hands. "We want to see some real glove-work—something fast and furious. Of course you're liable to get battered up some, but you're no doubt used to that. Here's ten dollars to buy salve for the bruises that are waiting for you, and," he rattled on, "to encourage you to do your best, we four spectators will each give you another ten dollars if you succeed in knocking this big fellow out." All hands joined in the laughter which greeted this announcement from the great sporting promoter, and Patsy thieved a knowing glance at him as he started for his dressing-room, muttering, "Four t'ms ten's forty, and one's fifty—mother'll have a fit!"

PUGILIST and pupil sat in opposite corners of the training-ring, and President Fulmer, watch in hand, squeezed through the ropes and addressed "the audience."

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am running this show, and I hope that fact will be a sufficient guarantee that it is on the square. At the first sign of faking on the part of either of these principals the contest will be declared off and there will be things doing which are not down on the bill."

Doolan laughed at this "little joke," though, to tell the truth, that laugh of his did not add materially to the sum total of the world's supply of mirth. There was a note of seriousness in Fulmer's speech and manner which was not to be mistaken. As for Patsy, he was kept busy during the president's remarks, in two directions—the sustained simulation of absorbing interest in official instructions, and the avoidance of a series of desperately winked signals from Doolan's corner.

As Fulmer proceeded, with increased emphasis, to picture the dire things in store for the first man who showed signs of faking, the bearing of the big professional, now plainly disgusted at Patsy's gaping dullness, was observed to undergo a sudden change. A new idea seemed all at once to possess him. He ceased to smile. His face became set. He glared at the man in the center of the ring, at the young athlete in the opposit corner, and jammed the thin layer of padding back from that part of the glove which covered his right knuckles. Patsy observed all this. He knew what it meant. Though making no outward sign, he smiled—smiled, as the late lamented Bill Nye would have said—elsewhere.

"Time!" called the self-appointed referee. "Shake hands!"

Doolan, jaws set, eyes a-gleam, moved warily to the center of the ring. Patsy, with right hand extended, stepped lithely forward to meet him. Doolan drew close to the young fellow and, instead of grasping the proffered glove with his right hand, he threw the weight of his left upon it and, before McGlynn could divine his purpose, his mighty right whizzed through the opening, caught Patsy flush in the face and sent him reeling against the ringpost across the enclosure, limp and dazed.

Doolan bounded across the ring to finish his work before the victim of his treachery could recover from the shock, but Fulmer sprang in front of him and waved him back. The three spectators were on their feet yelling, "Foul!" "Shame!" But the angry referee commanded silence and, standing between the boxers, ordered Doolan to his corner. The slight delay gave McGlynn an opportunity to collect his scattered senses and, after giving his head a shake or two, he was himself again, except for a rapidly swelling lump under the left eye. Fulmer started to make another speech, hesitated, bit his lip, glared from one to the other of the boxers, and then, stepping over to McGlynn, asked, "Do you want this contest to proceed?"

"Certainly," answered the young fellow cheerily, "I'm good as new."

"Then we'll make that read twenty, instead of ten, from each spectator, if you knock him out," whispered Fulmer in his ear.

"Thanks." And, gazing across the ring at the scowling Doolan, he muttered, "Four t'ms twenty's eighty, and ten's ninety—mother'll have two fits!"

"Time!"

Patsy stepped to the center, and waited. Doolan took a couple of strides from his corner, and stopped. The youngster, moving like a cat, lessened the distance between them by a yard—another foot—another. At all but reaching distance they faced each other, standing like graven images, motionless, each waiting for the other to lead. A full minute of this tense inaction, then a quick feint caused the veteran to drop his left hand—an inch. It was enough. Across the lowered guard flashed the fist of the hard-hitting novice. It found a target at the point of the jaw and—the lights went out for Mr. Doolan!

Ten minutes later the "Pride of the Coast" came out of his trance and propounded the usual question. He was informed that he was on the floor of the shower-bath room, having been carried there by Patsy McGlynn and three attendants; that he had met with an accident while boxing; that he was the victim of a compound fracture of the jaw; that he was shy sundry molars, incisors and bicuspids; that President Fulmer was waiting to see him.

As soon as he could be made presentable, Mr. Doolan went into executive session with Fulmer and his directors. Patsy McGlynn was also present. It was not a long session, Mr. Doolan falling readily into the views expressed by the president of the Califrisco Club and his fellow officers. The Club, through its representatives, expressed poignant regret, yea, pangs of pain, at the mishap which would prevent Mr. Doolan's appearance at the coming fistic entertainment; and, with panting interest for his future welfare, pointed out the benefits of continuous travel beyond the limits of the State. Mr. Doolan, with his hand to his jaw, nodded the thanks he could not find words to express and—the session adjourned.

* * *

"I'M SURE I've tried to bear up under the strain," sighed the Widow McGlynn, "but it doesn't seem to do any good. Matters become worse every day. There is no hope anywhere. The rent——"

"What's the matter with *me?*" cried Patsy, bursting into the room like an elephant rampant on its hind legs. "Ain't I a tolerable imitation of the hope you're talking about? Look me over—I'm a billionaire!"

"Patsy, Patsy, how can you be so foolish? The rent-man and the coal-man and the grocer have been here again, and we're going to be put out next Monday morning!"

"Well, this is only Wednesday night."

"But how are we going to live? I paid bills with that money you gave me last night and we haven't a cent. How can we——"

"Mother, look here. Did you ever know anybody to win anything by being gloomy and looking on the dark side of things?"

"Well, what is the use——"

"*Did* you?"

"I suppose not, but——"

"And haven't you noticed that good fortune always follows cheerfulness?"

"Not always."

"Yes, *always!* Drawing a hand from his pocket the incorrigible held it above his mother's head and, with the other taking her gently but firmly by the chin, he commanded, "Now smile! Smile!"

Her son's ridiculous attitude forced the good woman to smile in spite of herself, and instantly the massive hand above her head opened and she was submerged under a shower of greenbacks and coins.

"Patsy! Wh-where in the name of—where did all this money come from?"

"From that smile of yours, of course!" teased the roaring Patsy. "Let it be a lesson to you!" And while the happy mother went into retirement against the dancing heart of her big boy, Sister Annie collected the scattered fortune with a broom.

III

THE Thursday morning papers announced under scare-heads that, owing to an injury received while training, the famous pugilist, Mike Doolan, would be unable to meet the Australian heavyweight, Jack Farnum, on Friday night. Fortunately, however, the Califrisco Club management had been able to procure a substitute for the injured fighter—an Unknown whom Farnum had agreed to meet under conditions absolutely identical with those arranged for his fight with the Coast favorite.

These conditions called for a purse of twenty thousand dollars, winner take all, and a division of the gate-receipts on a basis of seventy-five and twenty-five per cent. to the winner and loser respectively. All bets on the interrupted event had been declared off and the first effect of the announcement had been to make the Australian a big favorite over the Unknown, the "wise ones" figuring that, barring Doolan, no heavyweight then on the Coast had a chance against the foreigner.

Mr. Fulmer owned one of the finest private gymnasiums in the city and it was there that Patsy McGlynn spent all of Thursday, perfecting himself in a few tricks of "foot-work" and trying to demonstrate to the personal friends of his patron that the Club had been fully and entirely justified in presenting him as a substitute for the injured fighter. Of course it was impossible to conceal the identity of the Unknown from the newspaper men, but when the young fellow frankly explained to them his reasons for wishing to keep his name out of the papers they patted him on the back, promised him all possible protection and wished him all kinds of success.

Next day the young athlete lounged about home until late in the afternoon, keeping his mother and sister in merry humor, and explaining, with minute attention to every horrible detail, the ghastly fate he had planned for them if he ever again caught them giving way to sad and gloomy forebodings.

"The only way to make the bugbear of bad luck hike to the woods is to grin in his face," he said. "Laugh at him—that's the dope! Now, I want you two to keep grinning till I get back home. I'll be a little late, maybe, but you keep grinning. Start in right now—one—two—three—that's it! Now keep it up!" And he was gone.

"McGLYNN," said Fulmer, "I want a serious word with you. I've got a big bunch of money here, mostly my friends', to be wagered at the ringside. I don't want to lose it."

"Bet it on me, then, Mr. Fulmer, and get it all placed before the first round is over."

"But why are you so certain of success, Patsy? This man Farnum is a mighty tough proposition. I want to know the grounds for your confidence. Of course, I think you have a fair chance; but why are you so absolutely certain about it?"

"Mr. Fulmer," returned the young boxer, in a tone of unusual seriousness, "I'm going to win this fight because I *think* I'm going to! You can do anything, if you think you can!"

"There's lots of glory in it, if you win."

"I'm not looking for that brand of glory, Mr. Fulmer. I'm after that big purse your Club has hung up, and the long end of the gate-receipts. I'm fighting to-night for—for mother and Annie. It'll be my first and last prize-fight. And I'm going to win! So get your money up early—the odds won't be so good after the first round."

"Well, go to it, my boy. I'll take a chance on you."

BIG Jack Farnum shouldered his way along the crowded aisle, mounted the stage steps and squeezed his bulky form between the ropes of the arena. Seating himself in his corner, he sent his gaze across to where the substitute and attendants were busying themselves with the glove-lacings. A sneer curled his lip.

"They tell me that's the kid they had sparring with Doolan," he snarled in his second's ear. "They say he's fast. Fast! His speed'll do 'im a —— of a lot o' good!

I s'pose the Club had to give some kind of a show and that amateur was the only thing they could get to go agin me. Tighten up that glove!"

"Maybe you'd better let the bout go a few rounds, Jack," whispered the second, "so's to give the crowd a little bit of a run fer it's money."

"Few rounds nothin'!" sneered the veteran pug. "Do you think it 'ld do my reputation any good to have that brat boastin' that he went any distance with me? Not yet! When the gong strikes I s'pose he'll just stand in his corner an' shiver. I'll walk over an' clout him a couple o' stiff ones and—we'll catch that midnight train for Chicago!"

The principals and their seconds were motioned to the center of the ring, where the former shook hands and listened to the referee's interpretation of the rules. As the two boxers stood there the backers of the Australian could already hear their winnings jingling in their pockets. Their man towered fully two inches above the substitute fighter, and his great muscular shoulders loomed formidably in comparison with those of the younger man. What most of the enthusiasts in the audience failed to note was that Patsy stood "hunched over" so that he appeared a couple of inches shorter than he really was, and that the shuffling awkwardness of his movements as he traveled to and from the center of the ring was a decidedly clever bit of acting. The appealing look which the young fellow bent upon the professional was interpreted by that amused gladiator as a bid for mercy. So he was confirmed in his original determination to make short work of it.

The gong struck and big Jack Farnum started across the ring on his mission of mercy. He had negotiated the first half of his second stride when something hit him. It came from the opposite corner and bore all the outward semblance of a human thunderbolt. The audience saw it streak like a comet across the intervening space, collide with the giant and send him staggering to his corner. Then, as the rope, tightened by his weight, hurled him back, he was met by a blinding hail of fists which pelted his rocking head and face unmercifully. Giving him no time to recover, the furious Patsy drove him with slashing uppercuts and body-smashes along the side rope to the corner-post, where he brought up, bloody and blinded by the battery of blows, limp and helpless.

The crowd went wild. The referee pushed Patsy toward the center of the ring and stood over the gasping gladiator, counting —one—two—three—four——

"Get up!" yelled the Australian's second. Five—six—seven—eight——

"Get up!"

Farnum let go the ropes and reeled like a drunken man into the ring. His hands hung at his sides. He leered about him, foolishly.

"Finish him, McGlynn!" ordered the referee.

"Hit a man like that? Why, sir, I couldn't——"

"Finish him, I tell you! The rules demand it."

"Rules, or no rules, I can't, and I won't!"

"Put up your hands, Farnum. Put up your hands and fight!" commanded the official.

The veteran, slightly recovered, very slowly raised his fists and threw himself into a fighting attitude. Patsy measured the distance accurately, estimated the necessary force, and then—a feint, a short-arm jolt, and the pride of Kangaroo-land toppled over and took the count.

In handing Farnum the loser's end of the gate-receipts, the head of the Califrisco Club felt called upon to make a few remarks.

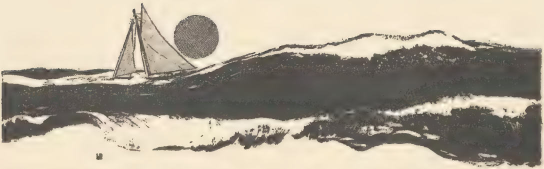
"It's the first dollar I have ever parted with grudgingly," he said. "I learned all about that scheme you and Doolan faked up to rob the Club and the public. I want to say to you and, through you to your partner Mike Doolan, that my regret at having to give you this money is more than counterbalanced by the delight it has given me to see an unknown boy lick the stuffing out of both of you! Good-by, *Mister* Farnum!"

◆

"NOW, Sis, while I'm getting my factory ready for business and fixing up our new home, I want you and mother to go over and give the swells and belles of Europe a treat. And when you get her off in some dark corner, away from all lines of communication, I want you to stand up, like a thoroughbred, and confess how you advised me to become a prize-fighter!"

"Oh, Patsy, I can never do that!"

"You can do anything you think you can!" he said.



ADVENTURING IN TIBURON

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF EXCITING WEEKS IN THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA

By JOHN A AVIRETTE

THE two Burke boys, Charlie Kanaka, and I sat in close consultation. Great deference was given to Charlie by the rest of us, since the matter under discussion was a boat. Was he not a Salt of the Sea from the Pacific Islands, where men swam out, in amphibious temerity, to slay the terrible man-eater shark in his own element?

Charlie finally said that *She* must be twenty-two feet long, half-decked, and with at least five feet beam. We should steal a rail from the Southern Pacific R. R., bend it to suit and bolt it firmly to her bottom, for a keel. This, he said, would stiffen her, give her low ballast and, if we struck a sunken rock in a blow, would save her from holing. Thus, in lieu of sinking, we should only turn over.

Charlie had his way. We built the boat, half-decked her, stole the rail from Collis P., and one glorious November morning christened her (with a bottle) *Santa Maria*. Never had boat a more propitious launching, and never had crew a fairer promise of fun galore—for were we not bound for the mouth of the Colorado River, Lower California and Tiburon Island? And, where, pray, was a wilder or more dangerous coast on which to venture to one's heart's content?

Frank was the elder of the two Burkes. He had six notches on his gun, while Pete, as a modest younger brother, had only four. I had killed bear and deer, while Charlie had once licked a French cook. We were thus a crew of valor and prowess, fit for all adventures by sea or land.

Old man Shaunnessy and the other half of Yuma came down to see us off and bid us God speed. Shaunnessy is an Irish prince—a remote descendant of Brian Baru. He has "kept saloon" in every Government Post, every mining camp and town in all Arizona. He is a kind old man with a stutter and fine principles—for he gave us a gallon.

We "up-hooked" about 10 A. M., November 11th, to the tune of revolver-shots, cheers from the bank, the braying of burros and the barking of dogs. That night we had made only twelve miles, for we put in at Hall Hanlon's ranch near Pilot Knob—for watermelons. Hanlon gave us six whoppers, then helped us punch a hole in the gallon; for California, like Arizona, is a very dry country. Hanlon is a Missourian from Kentucky, when drunk, and a very hospitable man at all times. He is much beloved and feared in Yuma, since he is not only kind to a fault, but is also hasty—when crossed.

Nov. 12—We are now down opposite the Colony. The immense Tule-flats on either bank of the river are simply alive with hogs, "gone-wild" descendants of the lordly Berkshires and Poland-chinas, abandoned here by the Blythe colonists when the mosquitoes ran them off. We camped on an island, to minimize the mosquitoes, and while the rest cooked supper I took the skiff and pulled for Sonora and pork. I got the pork. I came near getting too much pork, for when I shot the pig he squealed. About twenty great wild hogs responded to his cry of distress and, bounding out of the tule, rushed at me in fierce wrath. I stood not on the order of my going; we made it in one heat to the river bank, whence I dived headlong into the muddy waters of the Colorado. When things had cooled off, I sneaked carefully back for my rifle and the pig. To those who know humanity, it is needless to state that my arrival at camp was the signal for merciless jeers, mollified somewhat when I produced the pig.

Nov. 13—To-day we are camped at Shipyard Slough. Some two hours after our arrival we saw the famous "tide-rip" run in from the Gulf. A wall of roaring water, at least thirty feet high, rushed into the mouth of the river at express-train speed. I felt much awe at the sight, for many deaths have occurred at this point, when either greenhorns or careless folk have been caught in the fierce tide. Luckily, Charlie knows all about this coast, so we were hauled up high and dry, out of all danger. This tide is at its greatest at new-moon or full-moon, and if it happens that, at the same time, a strong wind is blowing up the Gulf, the tide reaches truly formidable proportions, sweeping over even the highest banks and destroying both property and life. This, of course, in old days, when there was a port here; now there is sand, solitude and sky.

Nov. 14—To-day we ran out of whisky, so Frank concluded to give up the trip and return to Yuma. His brother Pete also concluded that the salt-water looked too dry for him. Frank argued that it was only three miles across the tule flats to old Ponciano Dominguez's Ranch. He had heard that Dominguez sold contraband *mescal* to the Cocopah Indians, so the thing looked both promising and easy. He and Pete could easily pack their rifles and blankets across, secure horses from Dominguez and return to Yuma. Charlie and I expostulated in vain; Frank had made up his mind and Pete didn't have any. After they were gone, Charlie and I smoked mournfully for a time, then Charlie said "——." Now while I fully agreed with him, I mentioned the fact that the grub would last two men twice as long as four. At this sapient remark Charlie brightened up, and began to sing in the Honolulu language.

Nov. 15—This morning I killed a 600-pound jewfish, with a finely-placed shot. As he broke water, I pulled trigger. The shot cut the spine at the base of the skull. We are making "jerkey" out of him. The bushes around camp are strung with ropes, great and small, and every rope is weighed down with great white flakes of fish. At noon I shot an egret, cutting his neck in two, with the .22-long Winchester. His plumes were in fine shape, glossy and beautiful. Egret plumes are worth $40 per ounce in Yuma—in good, hard, iron money. At sundown the long expanse of the river-mouth was alive with leaping mullet. Millions were in the air at one time. I have never seen so many fish. This fish is about fourteen inches long, plump and juicy and of fine flavor, gray on the back, bright silver on the sides and dead white on the belly. We got eleven with the gill-net within ten minutes. The mullet run into the river from the Gulf with the flood-tide, as far as the water is brackish with salt. They penetrate every slough of the great tide-flats and with a net, as the tide runs out, they may be caught by the ton. These waters are unfished, and are simply alive with finny denizens.

The bones of four large vessels project from the sands of Shipyard Slough. These derelicts date from the days when Yuma was a proud United States port. Long before Collis P. Huntington built his Southern Pacific Railroad across the Continent this spot was a busy and thriving city of four houses. The climate being perfect, the people slept on board, or on the sands around the houses; going inside for a drink, if not broke. Now all this civilization is no more; only empty whisky-bottles and the bones of the dead ships attest the former opulence. Sea-going ships anchored here, to meet the river-steamers that carried all freight to Yuma, whence it was freighted on wagon-trains, to forts, towns and mining-camps for hundreds of miles over the Desert. Now the great tule and hemp flats are peopled with only wild hogs, millions of aquatic creatures and billions of mosquitoes. "*Sic transit gloria mundi!*"

Nov. 16—We are now on Montague Island. It is five miles across to the Lower California bank and eight to the Sonora side at Shipyard Slough. The island is some ten miles long by one mile wide—a low, flat sand-island, covered with short salt-grass and birdnests. Innumerable pelicans, cranes, geese, ducks, gulls, flamingoes, and heaven knows what other winged creatures come here to breed. The birds are very tame, showing little fear of man. The nearest human habitation is that of old man Dominguez; beyond his one lone house there is no other dwelling-place nearer than La Grulla, eighty miles to the north. Both coasts here are treeless, waterless, sunburnt sand wastes. Here and there a reef of black Malpai rock crops out of the eternal sand. Rain seldom falls, and when this rare phenomenon does occur it is likely to be a Summer thunder-shower, wetting a meager and limited patch of sand.

Many great turtles crawl out on the beaches of this island to lay. From one nest we dug some two bushels of eggs. This looks as if several "lady turtles" did business together. The eggs are palatable and, in my opinion, preferable to sea-bird eggs. The Mexican fishermen of this coast call this turtle the *carapachi*, and are said to esteem its flesh very highly. We found no sign of human beings on the island, not even the char of an old campfire. Charlie said that no one ever comes here but stray pearl-fishers from La Paz or Muleje, and then only when they are in hard straits for drinking water and put into the mouth of the river to fill their kegs.

Nov. 18—After a most glorious sail of sixty miles, we are safe and sound behind Point San Felipe. If there was ever a desert paradise on earth, this is one. Somewhere up on the American Line the Sierra Nevadas split in two. One of the forks strikes down by the southeast, to butt boldly into the Gulf of California. We have found a sheltered cove, some shade trees and a small spring of sweet water. At extreme low tide a hot spring boils up from the sands at the water's edge. This water is very hot and somewhat sulphurous. Our drinking spring is a mere trickle from the cliffs, a dainty rock-pool, holding but a few gallons.

We found many wild-game tracks around this spring, apparently those of mountain sheep or deer. The tide-rocks are covered with great masses and clumps of oysters. The water of the inlet is so clear that even small fish may be seen at great depths. We have blockhauled the boat and are prepared for a long stay, for truly we have found a sportsman's paradise!

Nov. 19—Alas, our Eden has its serpents! Charlie has killed six rattlesnakes, and I nine. Unfortunately this is not the worst of it, for this place is wormy with *hydrophobia skunks*—diminutive, spotted pests, more dangerous than any other living animal! During the night one of these abominations touched my face, giving me a fine scare. After this I sleep in the *launched* boat! Charlie is a stoic and needs no nerve-tonics. My wild yell in the night brought him up sitting, rifle in hand.

"What's de matta?" he asked.

"One of these blankety—blank—ety blank skunks touched my face!" I cried.

"Did him bait you?"

"No," said I, "but he scared nine kinds of tar out of me!"

"Well," said Charlie philosophically, "if you is scare, you can't sleep, so mak up fire an' keep'm off me; I sleepy."

So my guide, philosopher and friend lay calmly back in his blankets and snored peacefully the rest of the night. Charlie is a gentleman; even his snore is musically gentle. He carries his sixty years like a day and his frame is as vigorous as that of a boy of twenty. He is a primitively simple and honest man, taking no thought for the future, hating no man and fearing no living thing under the sun. Happy Charlie!

These hydrophobia skunks are the most horrible of created creatures. They are less than one quarter of the size of the ordinary skunk, are spotted and are very vicious. In new countries, where men camp out and sleep on the ground, they are more dangerous than a hundred rattlesnakes. The snake strikes solely in self-defense, while the skunk is a nocturnal prowler, biting without provocation the unfortunate sleeper. About ten per cent. of the deaths in Lower California are due to the bites of this skunk. The people are poor and apathetic; they sleep on the ground and have no doors to their huts. The skunks are numerous, are vicious with the disease and bite them. The bitten person contracts hydrophobia from the bite and dies a terrible death. "It is God's will! For if he willed it not, how could it happen? Who may go against the will of God?" They are worthless folk, and fatalists.

Nov. 20—To-day has been a peach! At daybreak I took the 30–30 carbine and went out for deer. I did not get a deer, but I did get two tremendously fine bighorn sheep. I ran into a band of twelve and proceeded to lay out the two patriarchs of the flock. Both were fat as butter, and each had a splendid head of horns. Fortunately I made the kill near camp, for both sheep were very heavy. I went in with one, staggering under the heavy load. Charlie was disgusted.

"What for you shoot ole *he* one?" he snorted.

When I got my breath I said, "For the horns, Charlie; they will make such splendid trophies."

"We no eat horn!" he asseverated sourly.

"That is true, Charlie," said I, "but just think of the immense satisfaction of the trophies!"

After ruminating over this strange view of hunting, Charlie's native gentility came to his aid. He smiled wanly and then said hopefully, "Mebbe you sell 'm horn to Tenderfoot."

"Mebbe so," I conceded weakly.

Going up to the spring for water, I shot a mountain lion. I came very near not seeing him as he crept away among the rocks. He, too, had gone for water, to find death at the hands of a strange creature that he had never seen before. No more juicy fawns for his lionship! His skin isn't overfine, but maybe I can "sell 'm to Tenderfoot."

Nov. 21—We have jerked both of the sheep. They made a full gunny-sack of jerky. The meat is fat, savory and tender, so I have risen in Charlie's esteem.

We have neighbors! Four lean, dirty, Mexican pearl-fishers, from Muleje. They beat around the point of rocks about 3 P. M., saw our smoke and steered for our boat. When near, one of them called out to know if we had found fresh water. On our replying in the affirmative, they landed. When they were ashore they came up to shake hands. We picked up our rifles and declined this honor, contenting ourselves with directing them to the spring. This is a lone place, far from courts of justice. They each carry a long knife and their looks are very villainous, and our boat and outfit are very desirable to such as these, so we are warily polite, knowing that dead "Gringos" tell no tales. They unloaded four water-kegs and started for the spring. When they returned I called one of them over and gave him some jerked meat, some coffee and tobacco. After a mellowing-up smoke he became very communicative. "Down the coast," said he, "where two sharp rocks project from the sea, there is much *oro* [gold]."

Why didn't they dig it out?

They were only pearl-fishers and knew nothing about gold-mining. He had seen the grains of gold, however, in the sands of a dry gulch.

"Is there any fresh water there?"

"No water."

"How far is it?"

"Two days' sail, if the wind is good."

"Where are you going?"

"Back to Muleje, with our pearls." He here undid a greasy belt and showed us some really beautiful pearls. He frankly admitted that they were poachers. God, said he, had made the sea and the pearl-oyster. A bad Government had sold the pearl monopoly to English and French pearl-companies, thus depriving the poor of a natural right. He, for one, did not concur, so he poached. "This pearl," said he, "is worth at least 600 *pesos*, yet we will get scarcely 200 *pesos* for it, since we are constrained to sell our pearls to illicit pearl-buyers, who cheat us." He would, however, sell it to us, very cheap. We thanked him, but declined on the plea of poverty. He sniffed incredulously, and then took his departure, after bidding us good-night and thanking us for the food.

That night I slept all night, while Charlie watched. He was to have awakened me at midnight for my turn, but he did not do so, for Charlie is, as I said, a gentleman.

Nov. 22—They went away at dawn—back down the Lower California coast. When they were decently around the point, I took the 30-30 carbine and slipped out on the farther rocks to see that they *really went*. When I peered cautiously over the last rock, they were a mile away, under full sail for the south. I sat on the rocks and watched the sunrise. Almighty God, how wonderful are Thy works! Out from the bosom of a silver sea rose the sun in spotless splendor; far out at sea, a school of whales played and gamboled, spouting into the air streams of spun silver, then diving, to reappear farther on. The boat of the Mexicans became a mere dot on the southern horizon. I was glad to be alive, for was not the world beautiful, beautiful, beautiful!

I went back to Charlie, and a steaming pot of coffee.

"Gone?"

Yes, really gone. Did he believe the story about the gold?

Yes, he believed it, for Captain Polhemus, of Yuma, had told him the same story. Polhemus was no Mexican and no liar.

Should we hunt for it?

Yes, if I wanted to go. We had six empty five-gallon coal-oil cans that would hold fifteen days' water—if we didn't wash.

II

Nov. 24—The jerky is all packed, the coal-oil-cans are lashed tight amidships and every canteen and bottle is a-brim for the trip. We have cooked ten days' rations of bread, so as to economize water when once off down this dry coast. At 11 A. M. we pulled out with the oars far enough to catch the breeze. As the sail bellied out and the ropes drew taut, we waved a farewell to our snaky, pole-catty paradise. Like all mundane things, it has its good and evil intimately blended. We were not bitten and we *did* have fine hunting, fishing and bathing. The sun was clear and warm, the breeze pure and the hills very, very beautiful.

Charlie was right to a dot about stealing the rail for a keel. This heavy ninety-pound rail trims the craft beautifully and in a stiff breeze the boat behaves like a thing of life. We are making about three knots, and at this rate should sight the twin rocks by noon to-morrow. We have pored over our U. S. Coast Survey chart, and have come to the conclusion that the Greaser's "twin rocks" must mean the San Louis Islands in the Bay of Vistacio, some seventy-five miles S.E. by S.

The wind freshened to a half-gale by 3 P. M., so we took two reefs in the mainsail. Charlie is a bolder sailor than myself. I prefer to do my dying on dry land, so when a comber slaps me in the face, it dampens my enthusiasm. Bailing water ceaselessly for some hours becomes real, true exercise after the second hour. Charlie had the tiller and I had the bailing-can, and the brine that dripped from my noble brow did not all come from the ocean. About half-past six we saw a cove and steered for it. The shore was rocky and uninviting, but a closer acquaintance showed a little creek-like slough, where the water was still as a church. I landed and collected enough brush to cook supper and breakfast.

Nov. 25—This morning we pulled out into the offing and waited for a breeze. As no breeze showed up, we began to fish, catching a number of worthless croakers, two young sharks, and five fine rockbass. About 9 A. M. the wind came, so we "up-stick-and-away," for the south. The wind freshened steadily until about four o'clock, when it began to blow in puffs. Toward night we watched the coast for an inlet and, finding none, resolved to sail in the moonlight. Just before sundown we sighted the islands, then almost immediately saw the high hill-point of Cape Final. Charlie turned in for the first sleep and I let him sleep until half-past three in the morning. The sea was fairly smooth and the night-breeze soft and delicious. Great fish leaped at intervals from the dim sea and unseen gulls called from the distant shore. After the moon went down the sky became a marvel of glittering worlds. Ah, but I love the Night and her stars!

Nov. 26—When I woke I smelled coffee. Peeping out of the cuddy-hole, I saw Charlie with a finely puckered brow, frying fish and trying to dodge smoke. The "smoke-nuisance" of our great cities is not in it with the smoke of a measly brush campfire. Times innumerable I have circled a campfire like a merry-go-round, but the smoke would persist in blowing my way, going up my nose, making my eyes water and making me swear like a pirate.

Breakfast over, we hoisted the sheet and started to cruise along the mainland, looking for a good shelter. We found none to suit us, so we picked out a smooth path of sand and ran the boat ashore. We then rigged our block and tackle and pulled the boat clear into the brush, so as to hide her from any stray sea-prowlers who might happen along. In the afternoon I took the 30–30 carbine and went prospecting. About a mile inland I came upon two fresh human tracks, evidently those of an Indian buck and his squaw. Going back, I told Charlie, who only grunted.

"If," said I, "any Indians live around here, they drink fresh water. Let's look them up."

Charlie grunted again, but this time it was a grunt of assent.

Nov. 27—We started at daybreak with our rifles and the two-gallon canteen. I took the trail of the Indians and followed it some three miles inland. Here we came out on the edge of a deep canyon that had a wide, flat bottom. Down in this flat we saw a dozen or two wickyups, the smoke from which showed them to be inhabited. We slipped down a small side ravine and came out beside a large wickyup, where a squaw was skinning a turtle. When she saw us she dropped the turtle, squalled and lit out like a streak. The whole village now took to the brush, leaving us alone with the huts. We called loudly to them in Spanish, saying "*Amigo, amigo!*" but with no further result than to accelerate their speed.

We now examined the huts. The wickyup of the "turtle-lady" had two large water-*ollas*, three earthen cooking-pots, a *metate* for grinding corn or seeds and a couple of fish-spears. In one corner we found a gourd partly full of pumpkin-seed, a piece of broken mirror and a joint of reed. Shaking the joint of reed, we found that it rattled inside, and further examination disclosed the fact that it contained about an ounce of placer-gold.

We now started to look for the water-hole, and found it some half-mile down the canyon. The Indians had dug a hole in the sands of the arroyo, where, at the depth of some four feet, they had found passable drinking water. Then we went back to the wickyup of the "turtle-lady," and left some tobacco on her stone *metate*, as a free gift.

WE RETURNED to the boat, and there, at sundown, an old Indian hailed us from the bluffs. On our making him friendly overtures, he came down to see us. He spoke fairly good Spanish and seemed very intelligent. We gave him a good supper, and while he got on the outside of this, we talked. He said his name was Tomas, and that the name of his people was "Simangitos." This tribe, he said, was very poor and very few in number. He said that they lived on grass seeds, picayunes, fish, turtles and an occasional deer. They had no corn, because the country was too dry to plant corn. He said that they washed a limited amount of placer-gold out of the sands of the dry-washes. At long intervals one or more of them took this gold across on the other side (Pacific) and traded it to Mexicans for flour and cloth.

"Have any white men ever come here before?" I asked.

"Two parties have come," said he. "The first to come were two white men who came in a boat like yours. These brought a machine [dry-washer] and took out much gold. They were good men and cured our sick, but they themselves got sick and died. When they were dead we hid their machine in a cave and told no one, for we were afraid that the Mexican police would think that we had killed them. We loved them and did not kill them."

"Of what did they die?" I asked.

"Of the bubble-sickness," he replied.

Seeing that I did not comprehend, Charlie told me that the Indians called smallpox the "bubble-sickness," from the pustules that broke out on the patient.

"The others," said Tomas, "came in a very large boat that smoked much. These were rough and bad men. They were ten in number. Seven of these were Mexicans, who stole our food and attacked our women. We ran away into the hills, and in the night our young men slipped back and slew four of them. The others then made a great smoke on their boat and went away."

"Dat was Captain Polhemus an' his outfit," put in Charlie. "I remember dat time. Dey come in steam tug, an' Polhemus he bring seven Mexican from Yuma."

I gave Tomas a pound of tobacco, one of coffee, two of sugar and ten of flour. "Here," said I, "are some gifts; take these home and come again early to-morrow."

The old man took his gifts and silently disappeared in the night. Presently we heard the subdued gabble of voices from the cliff. Tomas had not come alone, but, like a prudent general, had hidden his forces for reprisal in case of bad faith.

Nov. 28—About six this morning Tomas was back with a sack of roots that he claimed were very good eating. Six young men came with him. These had good faces and were lithe, quick, straight fellows. Their deportment was the epitome of grave modesty. They sat on the sand in silence, speaking only when spoken to, and evincing no curiosity. I made a great pot of coffee, and then served them a huge meal of coffee, bread and jerked jewfish. When they were as full as they could hold, every face beamed with good feeling.

"Charlie," said I, "I believe we can trust these people."

"Yaas," said Charlie, "if you don't do 'em no bad t'ing, trust 'em."

The Indians now had a great confab in their own tongue. When they were done, Tomas said, "The two good white men who died here were our brothers. They cured many of us from the bubble-sickness. Their medicine was so strong that we have never understood why they died. We have now a fine young man very sick. A month ago he took our gold and went over on the other coast to trade. When he came back he became very ill. First a bad cold-spirit makes him very cold, then a hot-spirit makes him burn. We would like that you cure him, if your medicine is as strong as that of the other two good white men."

"I will consult with my partner," said I.

The Indians now respectfully withdrew. "Charlie," said I, "this sick Indian has evidently contracted malaria on the other coast. We have plenty of quinine and calomel, so I am going over to cure him."

"Very well," said Charlie, "go and cure him."

I now made up a bed-roll, took the needed medicine and called over one of the young men. "Come," said I, "you are strong. Bring my bed along."

Dec. 2—The sick man is cured of his chills and fever. He is still very weak, but the cold and hot devils have fled before the "strong medicine" of the white man. Nothing can exceed the silent esteem and gratitude of these poor savages. This morning Ahtú, the sick man, took my right foot and put it upon his head. The assembled onlookers all cried "*Tu-roo, tu-roo!*" (good, good).

Tomas came in from a turtle hunt at noon. He said, "You men are now our brothers. You white men love gold; we have the machine hidden in a cave, and it is still good. We will give it to you, so that you may get much gold."

Dec. 3—The machine is a thirty-ton dry-washer. As this climate is so dry that nothing rots, all that the machine needs is overhauling and grease. We will set it up in the same place it was worked before.

Dec. 4—Ahtú, Charlie and myself have now run the dry-washer for two days. We have taken out four and a half ounces of gold. At $16 per ounce, this makes $12 a day per man. It is needless to state that we are well pleased. I have sent four of the young men across to Encinal to buy flour, charging them strictly to say nothing of our presence to any one whatsoever.

Ahtú has offered me as a free gift his most precious possession, to wit, his wife. I have thanked him kindly, stating that we white men, when good men, love only one woman, and that, as I already love the One Woman, I can not honestly love two. This phase of male virtue seems beyond his primitive philosophy, yet he has silently acquiesced, as he does in all things that are my will. I believe he loves me in his dumb and simple fashion—and I am not displeased.

Charlie is "making googoo eyes" at a coy widow. This lady's name is Ma-hat-mí, and she is the relict of two successive gentlemen who have both passed out by the bubble sickness route. The lady herself has the "face-of-a-thousand-pits," for she had the disease herself. She is fairly young, however, kindly and industrious. I have noticed that Charlie is easily pleased, and that his ideas on some subjects resemble strongly those of the upper-class Stone Age.

Dec. 7—Ma-hat-mí to-day became Mrs. Charles Kanaka. The ceremony was short, sweet and unaffected. The bride wore neither veil nor orange-blossoms, being adorned with only her native virtue, a new red handkerchief, a bag skirt of calico and a man's shirt, the latter presented by myself. She was very proud of this gift, wearing it outside of everything, *à la* Chinaman. At 2 P. M. a drum was beaten by the bride's brother, while a cousin blew plaintive notes on a reed flute. This wedding-march was continuous during the nuptial feast, said feast consisting of coffee, beans, boiled corn, dried pumpkin, fish and turtle-eggs. We had also some edible roots, baked to a turn. The soul and core of the ceremony itself consisted in the bride and groom eating a small turtle together, the turtle being a sacred emblem.

After the feast we smoked, told stories and gambled for gold-dust. Fortune favored Ahtú, whose skill or luck was phenomenal.

Dec. 8—Last night Ahtú surreptitiously added his winnings to my sack of gold-dust. This Indian is a gentleman, one of God's fools—such as he who found Richard Cœur-de-Leon in his Austrian prison. Of course, I won't keep the dust, but I am touched beyond words. Tomas has the belly-ache—too much turtle-egg. I am giving him a dose of salts. One of the turtle-eggs must have been sour.

Dec. 9—Yesterday Charlie resolved to move his honeymoon up to the dry-washer. Ma-hat-mí is now chief cook and bottle-washer for the three of us—ably assisted by Mrs. Ahtú. She watches Charlie like a faithful pup, who, loving and trusting his master, ever yearns to lick his hand. Some white ladies might take a leaf out of Ma-hat-mí's book—else I have been a sorry observer. The gold is piling up rapidly, skunks are none, snakes are few, and the Winter weather is ideal.

Dec. 10—A ragged, starved Mexican peon was found down on the beach by one of the women. He has a great, livid wound in his head and is in the last stages of emaciation from hunger and thirst. We went down to see him, then had the Indians bring him up to camp, where we fed him broth every two hours. Tomas was displeased at our action. "Better kill this Mexican," said he. "These people are like snakes — if you warm them, they bite you!" All the village got into a great discussion at this; finally I went out and said to them, "I will not have this man slain. When he is well, we will bind his eyes so that he can not see the trail, and send him away to Encinal." As usual, they deferred to me.

Dec. 12—The Mexican is much better and stronger. He says that his name is Pedro Castañeda and that he is a pearl-fisher from La Paz. Last September he and four others sailed from La Paz in an open yawl, to poach for pearls. They had poor luck until a month ago, when they struck a phenomenally rich bank from which they took two hundred pearls in ten days, some of them worth great sums. Running short of water, they landed just south of Cape Final to search for a spring they had been told was there. He and one of his comrades had gone inland to look for the spring, and when they returned to the beach, the men, pearls and boat were gone, leaving them marooned to a dreadful death. His comrade had become violently insane with fear and had assaulted him with a club, inflicting a great gash in his head. Luckily he had his knife——!

"Where did you kill this man?" I asked.

"On the beach, some five hundred meters south of the Point," he replied.

The Indians heard him in silence, but I could see disbelief plainly written in their faces. They have suffered much harm in the past from Mexicans, hence do not love them. Tomas says he will send two young men down there to read the tracks.

Dec. 13—The two sign-readers are back. They say that the Mexican is a liar. It is true that a boat has recently landed behind the point, that five men landed from the boat; true that one dead Mexican lies on the beach. The rest of the Mexican's story is false, since the tracks show plainly that all five men were in the struggle. Tomas believes that Castañeda and the dead Greaser tried to sneak away with the boat and pearls while the others slept. He thinks that they were discovered and set upon at the water's edge, where one was slain and our friend Castañeda knocked senseless and abandoned. Charlie and I concur with him. We will send this man away so soon as he can stand the four days' walk. In the meantime we will keep silent about the dry-washer, not wishing to bring a horde of Greaser gold-seekers down on our Simangito friends or on ourselves.

Dec. 15—Castañeda has been sent away. He bitterly objected to the blindfold, but submitted sullenly when he saw that resistance was useless. To-day Ma-hat-mí found a nugget weighing *six ounces!* She had gone up a "little red canyon" to dig edible roots for dinner. She found one of the plants she sought, growing in the very bed of the wash. Digging down for the root, she struck bed-rock and this beautiful nugget. Ahtú and I are going back with her to-morrow, taking a shovel, a pick and a gold-pan.

Dec. 17—Talk about luck! Mrs. Charlie is a brown replica of the goddess herself! The gulch is rich, rich beyond our fondest hopes—rich as ——! We move the dry-washer over in the morning. When Charlie saw our cleanup (five pans), he said, "Jack, if dat —— Greaser know what we do here, we get all de —— yellow cut-troat from other side."

"That is unfortunately true, Charlie," said I, "but I couldn't have him killed like a beef, thief and liar though he be."

Seeing the wrinkles of apprehension on Charlie's brow, Ma-hat-mí rose silently, filled his pipe and brought it to him, a live coal neatly balanced on top of the tobacco. She has most white ladies looking like thirty cents—and even her smallpox marks become her of late.

Dec. 19—We have taken out 37 pounds of gold in the last three days! $192 per pound, multiplied by 37=$7,104—just think of it! We are searching for the ledge it eroded from, although most old miners claim that coarse placer seldom or never comes from a vein. In this instance they seem to be borne out by the facts. Our gulch is short, steep, and bare from where we are working on up the hill. From there up, the rocks of the sidehills are simply barren and rotten schist bedrock. A hundred yards below the machine our gulch debouches into the great dry-wash, where the bed-rock is buried under hundreds of feet of sand, pebbles and boulders. As it now stands, our rich channel is being buried deeper and deeper at every foot that we mine downhill. Up the gulch there is neither earth nor gold—only the bare, rotten schist.

Dec. 24—Gosh-wà and Ah-chit-wèh are back. They report that they left Castañeda in sight of Encinal. They took him to the top of the last sand ridge and told him to "Git!"

"Did he try to follow you back?" I asked.

"No," said Gosh-wà, "he no come."

That night Ahtú said to me: "If my brother will promise not to be angry, I will give him some news." When I promised, he continued: "When Gosh-wà and Ah-chit-wèh took the Mexican away, they saw that his heart was bad, for he had secretly made small holes in his bandage so that he could see the trail. When they started, Gosh-wà had ten arrows in his quiver and Ah-chit-wèh twelve. Gosh-wà returned with nine arrows and Ah-chit-wèh with ten. We Simangitos are careful of our arrows, since straight stems are very scarce. We recover the arrows when we shoot game. We destroy them when a man dies, or when we slay an enemy."

"I am sorry to hear this, Ahtú," said I, "yet at the same time it may be for the best, since Castañeda was, as you say, an evil man."

Dec. 25—This is Christmas Day. We have made a great feast and I have told the Indians the story of the death of the Christ. They said that they had heard this story long ago from their fathers, who had heard it from Mission priests. They had not believed the story, however, since if God had the power, he need not have slain his son, when his simplest wish would have made all men good. They were content with the religion of their fathers, since the story of "Tse-hùh," and the "Great Turtle" seemed more reasonable.

Jan. 1—Our rich streak is worked out as far as the heavy overburden will permit. If we had a steam hoist, timbers and heavy boards, we would attempt to go under the deep sands of the great dry-wash; as it now stands it would be courting death to attempt it. Our rich dirt has spoiled us for the $12-a-day diggings, so we are going to leave here and look for the rich pearl-bank Castañeda told of. We have told the Indians and they are very sad. Ahtú and his younger brother, To-weé, are going with us. "Where you go, I go," said Ahtú. Mrs. Ahtú and Mrs. Charles Kanaka are out on the ridge, howling mournfully under the stars. The grief of Mrs. Ahtú is in A Minor, while that of Ma-hat-mí is G Major. Both ladies are like Mrs. Noah—they want to go in the boat.

III

Jan. 5—Twenty and two Simangitos sat dejectedly on the beach as we rowed the boat out into the offing. Mrs. Ahtú and Mrs. Charlie Kanaka ran distractedly up and down the beach, making the air resound to their cries. I steered the boat and Charlie pulled the oars. Ahtú and To-weé sat stoically silent in the bow. All at once Charlie dropped the oars and stood erect. He was much affected, for twice he started to call to his Indian wife, and twice his voice broke. "Tell her, Ahtú, that I am coming back to her, to stay," said Charlie in a choked voice. Ahtú stood up, and putting his hands to his mouth, gave a peculiar call. Both women were at once silent, listening with strained attention.

Ahtú now called to the women that Charlie said he would surely come back to Ma-hat-mí and that when he came back, it would be to stay.

Ma-hat-mí now ran into the water and cried out joyfully: "Charlow say come back. Charlow no lie; him come, me wait!" She then turned back to Ahtú's wife and began to comfort her. An hour later all the small black specks on the beach climbed the face of the cliff and disappeared.

Jan. 14—We are unable to find the good bank of pearls. We have cruised as far south as the Animas and San Lorenzo Islands, yet have taken only ten inferior pearls. The pearl oysters are plentiful, but they are fat and hearty. To-weé took a fine pearl yesterday, a blue-black one, worth perhaps $200. We are going to look for a harbor on the east side of San Lorenzo Island, hoping that on the reefs we may do better.

Jan. 15—To-day Charlie made a kill on a large shark—*à la* Kanaka. We were anchored over a reef and Ahtú, To-weé and myself were diving for the shells, while Charlie was opening them. The rocks of the reef were thick with shells, yet they were depressingly healthy and hence free from pearl. Ahtú and I sat naked on the bow, taking a blow and rest, when To-weé dived for the rocks underneath. We saw his "streak" go down to the bottom. Charlie sat naked, smoking and opening the pearls with a long knife. All at once he spit out his pipe and dived for the boy. I then saw the shark. I grabbed a harpoon and poised it for a throw, but before I could cast, Charlie was alongside the shark's upturned belly. I saw a sudden whorl under the water, then the shark shot up into the air, with a great rip in his belly. To-weé and Charlie came up together, the first sputtering with fear, the latter cursing because his pipe had gone overboard.

"The —— pipe is black," said Charlie. "The —— reef is also black, now it vill be —— to fine dat pipe!"

Well, after repeated dips we found it, but we took no more shell that day.

The shell of the pearl-oyster is from four to seven inches across. The base or hinge of the shell is a flat, straight line, from which the body of the shell bulges like three quarters of a full moon. The pearl is found either in the stomach of the oyster or in its outer feeding-fringe. In the first case the pearl is likely to be large and lustrous; in the latter, small and of less merit. Not over one pearl in a hundred has a shape perfect enough to give it much value. At one side of the "hinge" a tuft of coarse horse-hair-like tentacle protrudes from the inside of the shell. It is with this coarse hair-like tentacle that the oyster adheres to his native rocks. A large oyster will test the strength of a strong man to dislodge his hold; a sudden, quick jerk will do the job, however, so soon as the knack of jerking under water is learned. There are tricks in all trades, even under the water.

Jan. 16—We took a hunt to-day on San Lorenzo Island. As Pete Kitchen says, "It was chiefly a hunt—and a —— pore ketch!" A few seagulls gave us a mournful ha-ha as we passed them. Outside of this, it was chiefly a rattlesnake hunt. The island is full of them, and how they got there is a job for a Philadelphia lawyer. Either they "must 'a' swum," or the island was once part of the mainland. "Saint Pathrick" is badly needed on San Lorenzo. Once clear of snakes, it would make a great place for an Irish picnic, and an Orange-Catholic affair of great spirit could be arranged, if "hand-sized" rocks mean anything. After due reflection, I withdraw the above, as whisky is as scarce as true charity between society ladies. Coming back, we found an old camp and some human bones. From the gold-filling in the teeth of the skull we thought it must be the skull of a white man. Poor devil, I suppose a rattler bit him.

Jan. 21—We have had four dreadful days of rain and wind. Time after time I thought we were gone and, but for Charlie's fine seamanship and our faithful bailing, we should be with the fishes. We have four lives and $29,000 in gold aboard, so it would be a double pity to swamp in a storm. I am tired beyond words!

Jan. 22—We are short of drinking water. The storm battered our water-cans until some of them have holes in them. We have only four great cans that are still watertight. We are now four drinkers in lieu of two. The storm blew us across the Gulf and left us at the southern end of Tiburon Island. We are now beating up the channel between the island and the Sonora coast. The wind is good, but a fierce tide is running against us, so that for the last few hours we are at a standstill. If the wind holds, we ought to get north like an express, when the tide changes our way.

We have seen several Seri Indians, who seem to be watching us from the cliffs of their island. Ahtú declares that these Indians are cannibals and that they are treacherous and cruel beyond words. This is unfortunate news, since we are compelled to land on the north end of the island for water. The chart shows no other water within one hundred miles, so we must take the risk. If they buzz around us too close, we will try some of Dr. Colt's and Dr. Winchester's pills on them.

Jan. 24—We are now exactly opposite the spot where the chart shows fresh water. We have also divided the last sup of water, at breakfast. We held a council of war and decided to land for water and take chances. We can't get back to the coast of Lower California at Vistacio Bay, for the wind is dead in the west. If we keep on north for the Colorado River, a change of wind may become a head-wind and so cause us to perish of thirst. So we have resolved to land, since we might as well die fighting as die of thirst. Ahtú has just seen a squaw come out of a clump of brush with a water-*olla* on her head. This may be a decoy to lead us into a trap. Anyway, here goes—for water or a row, or water *and* a row!

Jan. 25—Well, we had the row! Ahtú has two bullet-wounds, one in the flesh of the shoulder and a glancing shot in the head. I think his skull is very hard. Charlie is shot twice in the same leg. If God ever made a brave and devoted man, Ahtú is one! Here is how it happened: Ahtú and I being the best shots, we acted as guards for To-weé and Charlie, who were hurriedly to fill the cans. Ahtú took the 30–40 and I took the 25–35.

We waded ashore and each took a high knoll of sand on either side of the water-hole. Seeing no Seri Indians, we waved for Charlie and To-weé to come on with the cans. Charlie carried two of the good five-gallon cans and the 30–30 carbine. To-weé came behind him with the other two good cans and the three canteens. He also brought an iron pot to fill with. To-weé was unarmed.

Just as Charlie and To-weé began to fill the cans, we were fired on by concealed Seris, who lay in some scrub brush about one hundred yards away. Ahtú called to me to watch on my right. I turned just in time to see a big Seri buck aiming at me—not over thirty yards away. I ducked as he fired, then shot him in the mouth. He fell flat at the shot, lying sprawled on the sand, with the whole back of his head blown out by the bullet. To-weé shouted and, running over amid a shower of bullets, got his gun—a .44 Winchester carbine. Seeing this, the Seris yelled and rushed us, losing four more men. In this rush they wounded Ahtú in the shoulder and Charlie in the right leg.

When the Seris broke for cover Charlie and To-weé began hastily filling the cans. Just as these were nearly full, they began yelling again and opened a hot fire. This time they broke Charlie's wounded leg with another shot. We could see numbers of the Indians hastening down from the high ground to reenforce those who were engaged with us. To-weé now ran to the boat with two full cans and returned for more. Charlie was unable to stand, but sat grimly on the sand, pumping lead at the brush. To-weé now secured the other two cans and again ran for the boat.

This left Charlie and three full canteens at the spring. Seeing that Charlie could not walk, Ahtú ran down, shouldered Charlie, took up the three canteens and started staggering for the boat. At this the Seris rushed again, yelling and firing like devils. Ahtú now set Charlie down on the sand and both men began firing on the Seris. Ahtú was now struck in the head, falling to the ground. I ran from my knoll to succor the two men on the ground, but before I got there Ahtú rose up and killed the nearest Seri. I here upset two Seris in succession, and they again broke for cover.

Ahtú picked up Charlie once more, while I took the three canteens. Thus we reached the boat and put out under a heavy fire from the brush. To-weé and I now set the mainsail and we were soon out of range. I gave To-weé the tiller and began to look after the wounded. I tore up two shirts, bandaged Charlie's bleeding leg and made him as comfortable as I could. Ahtú had fainted from loss of blood and his heroic over-exertion, but I gave him some hot coffee and this brought him to. As I bathed and bandaged his wounds I saw him weakly smiling. "What in the —— are you grinning about?" I asked him.

"We killed many of them and we are all alive," he answered.

To-weé was the most dejected man of the lot. A perverse demon seemed to have entered his savage soul. At supper he refused to eat. "What is the matter with you?" I asked. He replied that he was an old squaw, since he had not slain an enemy. He deplored the fact that he did not know how to hit with a rifle. "Had I had my bow and quiver of arrows, I could tell a better story!" said he. I first chided him, then complimented him on his valor, saying that but for his coolness and devotion to duty we would all have been slain. At this he brightened up and ate a hearty meal.

Jan. 26—Ahtú is much better. Youth and a stout heart are helping him recover at a bound. His wounds were only flesh-wounds and, while he is weak and a bit feverish, he is getting well fast. I am wetting the bandages of both men with sea-water; though salt and painful, I believe it does their wounds good.

Charlie is in great pain, and is slightly delirious at times. I am afraid that his age and severe wounds are going to give him a hard rub, so I am much distressed, for old Charlie is a fine man. This morning To-weé said that if I would land on the Sonora coast, he would get good medicine. He was gone inland about an hour, returning with a squat, fleshy shrub which we pounded up and applied to the wounds. We also made tea of it and gave it to them to drink. It seemed to refresh them very much, especially Charlie.

Jan. 30—I have been too busy and tired to write much diary. Ahtú, while still weak and sore, is otherwise well. I tend Charlie constantly, for he is very ill. He is out of his head most of the time. At such times he talks Kanaka, of which we can not understand a word. If his wounds don't gangrene, I think we are going to save him. The wind is from the northwest and we are making slow but steady progress for the mouth of the Colorado. A storm now would be fatal to poor Charlie. We have refilled the cans from a swamp near the beach. We boil this water and it is drinkable.

Feb. 2—No sign of gangrene yet. He has less fever than any day this week. I believe he is going to live and I am overjoyed accordingly. Ahtú now takes his turn at things and this lightens my load so that I can get a little sleep. To-weé is a fine boy, but there is no one like Ahtú, for he is a *man*—a MAN! The wind has shifted to the southwest and we are making great headway. We ought to sight Montague Island to-night or in the morning.

Feb. 3—We are now, thank the Lord, safe and sound in Shipyard Slough, and have plenty of water to drink! Charlie is perfectly clear-headed, but very weak. Poor devil, he has suffered the tortures of the damned, but he is a game old cock and takes his medicine like a stoic. He says that his leg is numb, so we rub it gently every few hours. I am sending To-weé with the skiff to try to find old Dominguez's ranch. The sloughs are many and crooked, but if he has luck, he may stumble on the right one. I have warned him about the bore or tide-rip, so that he won't get caught and drowned.

Feb. 4—To-weé is back, but could not find the ranch. Ahtú will look after Charlie to-morrow, while To-weé and I have another try for the ranch. I wonder if the Burkes made it across on foot, burdened as they were with bed-roll and rifles? One wrong step in the bottomless mud of one of these sloughs would preserve one for future ages of geologists. They could then argue even more than the present day wiseacres; they might class Frank Burke's skull as neolithic or paleolithic, but Pete's would come under the class of plain "bone-head." Frank insisted that he knew the tide-flats and if that was true, the chances are that he made it all O. K.

Feb. 5—We are just back from the ranch. Old Dominguez is a kind old sow, but he is the ——est liar this side of Hades. Most Greasers are natural born liars, but old Dominguez is a liar by heredity, education, practise, inclination, general principles and mendicitis! He props his fat belly up in the shade and starts early in the morning. He knows where there are tons of "buried treasure." He has the cinch on "lost mines" that are pure gold—each vein being a mile wide and an inch long! Well, anyway, I bought a bottle of brandy from him, some milk and some sagu. This ought to strengthen old Charlie wonderfully.

A Cocopah Indian at the ranch told me that Frank Burke was dead, and that Pete was now Town Marshall of Yuma. He said also that it was rumored in Yuma that Charlie and I had been drowned by the bore. Charlie and I are not drowned by a —— sight. He may wind up shy a leg, but he has a fine stake of gold to keep him and, if he needs it, he can have my share as well as his own. Dominguez says that a young New York doctor is up in the bottoms, hunting for deer. I have sent the Cocopah with a letter, begging him to come down and attend to Charlie.

Feb. 7—The doctor was not a doctor. He was an unfortunate Tenderfoot "lunger," out here trying to prolong his consumpted life a few more years. Old Dominguez had seen his cartload of medicine bottles and had drawn his usual correct conclusion. If he should ever happen to tell the truth it would be instantly fatal to him.

We have sent over to the nearest Cocopah village, to hire four bucks to row and tow us up to Yuma. It will be —— going through the mosquito-belt the next few days. Coming down-stream with the current and everybody well and hearty is very different from bucking the river with a sick man.

Feb. 8—The four Cocopah bucks are here. We are to feed them and pay them twenty-five dollars for the trip. They say that they can make it in four days. As there is a strong wind blowing in from the Gulf, I think it will be wise to sail up as far as we can. Charlie seems morally encouraged at his nearness to a good doctor. One of the wounds is well. The other is continually suppurating, and his leg pains him all the time. He has had a hard time, with three rude but willing nurses. We are all cheerful and hoping the best for him.

Feb. 10—We are now more than half way up to Yuma. I sent a runner to Yuma to get a doctor to meet us at La Grulla. If he comes, we will take him aboard and send his horse back by the Indian runner. The mosquitoes are very bad; our faces are bitten terribly. These naked Indians do not seem to mind them in the least and their skins are as tough as bull-hide. Our best relief from the mosquitoes is obtained by daubing our hands and faces with a thick layer of soft river-mud. This seems either to fool them, or their bills can not reach through to the skin. This towing up-stream is slow and irksome traveling. A little more patience!

Feb. 11—Doctor Heffernan is here! He says that Charlie's leg will have to be operated on. He has sand and pieces of broken bone in the wound and they must be removed. He thinks the leg will be saved, although Charlie will always have a slight limp. Charlie is pleased that he won't lose the leg and says that a "Limpy is better than a Peg-leg."

Ahtú to-day licked one of the Cocopah bucks, because of a fancied disrespect to me. The Cocopah buck was grinning and making what Ahtú considered insulting gestures in my direction. Quick as a flash Ahtú was at him with a stick of driftwood, knocking him silly with a terrific blow. I stopped the row and, when explanations were made, it turned out that the Indian was describing a row he had had with another Cocopah some months before. I scolded Ahtú for overzealousness, gave the Cocopah a dollar and so salved the broken peace.

Feb. 13—Yuma at last! The boys all came down to greet the wanderers and lend a helping hand. Shaunnessy came in person and brought a felicitous quart, which, being "mountain dew," lasted the crowd about as long as a puff of smoke. Charlie was carried up to the hospital, and the many sympathizing friends were not thinned out by the sight of the bags of gold-dust. We deposited this at the express office and cleaned up for a restful loaf. Money is a great thing to tune the human heart to lively sympathy —with the possessor. This may sound like cynicism—yet I have ever noted that the sorrows of the unfortunate poor are likely to fall on dull ears.

Ahtú and To-weé were the recipients of much kindly curiosity, which, as I saw it offended Ahtú, I firmly put a stop to. He, To-weé and I are to live together in my old dobe shack, in easy reach of the hospital. The old *Santa Maria* was hauled up on the bank for a coat of paint and a general fixing up. She is a stanch boat and can stand many another trip down the river.

Mar. 10—I went down this morning to see them off. The *Santa Maria* was loaded down to the guards with grub and presents for Tomas, Ma-hat-mí, Mrs. Ahtú and the rest of the Simangitos. Ahtú has refused food these last two days and has cut off his hair, in sign of mourning at leaving me! I have promised him that "some day" I will come and pay him another visit. To-weé has two new rifles and cartridges galore. He is all fuss and fine feathers—a perfect peacock of a dandy. He boasted to me that if he ever fought again, he *would* "shoot kill many." The young ladies of the Simangitos may now prepare for the heartache, since this proud young savage is becoming a gay Lothario.

Charlie is entirely well, save for a slight limp that he will always have to remind him of Tiburon. He said to me, "Jack, I now pretty soon been old. I never go back to Honolulu. Ma-hat-mí a good vooman an' I lak her plenty."

I am sorely tempted to drop all else and go with them—but I am of another race and another world of men. An occasional lapse back into primitive life is good for the soul, however, and "some day," if God is willing, I will go to them for a time.

The parting from Ahtú is a bitter thing for me. Sophists may assert that there can be no true love and sympathy between the Indian and the Anglo-Saxon. That this is untrue is proved by the great affection and perfect trust between this savage youth and myself. Under the dark skin of this primitive man dwells a soul that is truth itself, and between this soul and mine own there is a bond of love—strong as the Promise of God. May God go with them!

DENNY THE RAT

BY EARLE C. WIGHT

DENNY THE RAT was broke. Grogan, his erstwhile friend and sharer in many illicit spoils, had kicked him out of his saloon when he asked for a drink. And Mike Sweeny, his brother-in-law, proprietor of a doubtful hotel where bed could be had for five, ten and fifteen cents, had refused him shelter. His shoes had great rents in them through which the water sloshed in and out, and the crown of his limp black hat, several sizes too large for him, occasionally overflowed, sending a cascade of dirty, black water down his back.

Never in all his years along the waterfront could he remember when there was not at least one drunk to be "rolled," but now even this was denied him. No vinous sailor-man staggered into his snares, pedestrians kept their coats tightly buttoned over illusive gleams of gold watches, even shop-girls hurrying down gloomy streets displayed no gaudy, jingling purses. Fate made sport of the wise one, the biter was bitten, the hunter hunted; Denny was broke.

Out of the darkness a blue-coated arm suddenly shot; fingers clutched his shoulder. The arm belonged to Billy McShane, the fingers to a hand he had many times crossed with pieces of silver. This time the hand was not greedy, but was the embodiment of the law—of all that was fearful, of a black wagon, of clanging doors, of bars and brutal treatment.

Denny wiggled away with a convulsive movement, leaving a goodly portion of his coat with the officer. Half-way across the street he paused to heap upon the offending head all the choice assortment of vileness he had picked up in his thirty-odd years. Billy McShane waved a friendly hand and nodded. Some day the Rat would pay for this, they both knew it, and, worked up to a frenzy of fear and hatred, Denny continued to express his opinion of the other until, thinking the joke had gone far enough, the policeman raised his whistle to his lips. With that Denny vanished.

Seated in an alley where the raindrops seemed neither so large nor so cold, he took counsel with himself. Then, as fully born as Venus from her sea-foam, an idea sprang into his mind.

Under its watery dirt his face paled a trifle; what he was about to do was a brave thing. Many men who did not deserve the appellation of Rat, or whose eyes were not set so close together, would have hesitated; but for the moment, between the gnawing at his belly and the goose-flesh on his skin, he was no longer the timid scavenger who pokes his nose fearfully about in the dark. That part of his nature which craved food, tobacco, alcohol, was in the ascendency. He turned the project carefully over in his mind; then, rising quickly, made his way to Grogan's saloon.

The barkeeper was in the act of drinking a glass at a hospitable stranger's expense. He paused to glare angrily at the intruder.

"Back again?" he snarled, reaching for the bung-starter. At any other time Denny would have fled, but for the present he was completely obsessed with his great idea. With his hand he made a motion well understood between the two. The barkeeper gave in sullenly, as if sorry to lose the opportunity of using his weapon. The thief slipped quietly into a back room. After a long time the garrulous stranger finished his drink and departed. Denny drew a deep breath and eyed the barkeeper stonily across the sloppy table.

"Gimme a poice o' poiper—none o' ye're dirty pad, cully—an enwelop and a stamp. Now chase yerself; this is me busy day!"

Grogan's night helper rose reluctantly. This was not the man he knew. Come to bully, he found himself relegated to the position of servant; nevertheless he went. Such is the dominance of a splendid conception.

The material at hand, the Rat wrote with many blotches, laborious lip-spelling of words, and hunching of elbows. With his letter finally finished, safe in the envelope and addressed, he rose to face the bartender leaning over his shoulder. That worthy stretched out a soft, white hand.

"Come in and have a dram," he said, "and I'll wrap you up a pint."

"Where youse goin' to stay?" he asked when the drink was gone. "Now, I've got a cot," he added tentatively; "if you think——" And the Rat said he did think, in rather a bored tone, for he was still under the spell of his great idea.

BY THE time Denny awoke on his bravely earned cot the missive was in the hands of the Chief of Police. And, while it may have caused intense excitement in that individual's pouter-pigeon breast, he displayed no undue elation. Graft is a delicate thing, a butterfly whose gold-powdered wings must be brushed ever so gently. The Chief, therefore, having pondered long and thoughtfully, pushed a button and gave a careless order. Affairs of importance should be hid under a bushel.

A little later Denny, somewhat tremulous at having to invade this holy of holies, entered. The night's rest had not done him good. Twelve hours of contemplation had weakened his nerve, for the deed he was about to do sat uncomfortably upon his cowardly nature. He sidled crabwise to a chair and, clutching his limp, black hat, watched the Chief's movements apprehensively. The latter, without looking up, passed him the letter to read.

Denny, in a quavering voice, began. He wondered greatly at himself—where he, a robber of drunks, snatcher of women's purses, purloiner of fat men's watches, ever conceived the hardihood to formulate such a plan.

The Chief's attitude toward him had as subtly changed as had the barkeeper's. There was just a spark of contempt in his eyes where Denny had been accustomed to find a blaze. Also—which warmed the cockles of his heart—there was a little hint of respect, which he thought due him now he was in a fair way of becoming a desperate character. Alas, Denny, it was only the fear of rubbing the dust from the butterfly's wings!

However, not being given to self-analysis, his chest took on an arch not unlike the Chief's own. He felt that fate, so long adverse, was beginning to relent.

The note read something like this:

> HONORED SIR—Yu kant find who has wrote this unles you gimme yure word not to prosecute fer past offenses. McShane tried to pull me last night as a vag, also I'm wanted on a charge of dipping. gimme a clean bill an Ill put yu wise on how to katch Larry Lackmore. we done several jobs together and got another framed up. I want haf the money five hundred plunks. pass the woid to Grogans nite man if yu mean biz. Signed a friend. p s this is no bum steer.

"Did you write that?" asked the Chief.

"I ain't no dip!" protested the Rat vehemently.

"Let's put it this way," said the Chief diplomatically: "Could you put your hand on the man who did write it?"

Denny thought that under certain conditions he might be able to find him. The agreement having reached a point where, as the law has it, "there is a meeting of minds," they proceeded amicably.

II

LARRY LACKMORE, as he was known at that time, was a peculiar if not eccentric character. Born of rich and influential parents, he chose voluntarily to espouse a career of crime, and, strange as it may seem, his success in this new line of endeavor had been even greater than that he had achieved as a cotillion leader. He was a thorn in the side of the police of two continents—an irritating thorn which not only refused to be removed but which gave notice every time it was going to rob the social body of a bit of its precious cuticle.

Instead of eschewing the light, Larry seemed to take a malicious delight in turning his tricks under the sun of public notice. He invariably warned his victims, a detail which in no wise interfered with his getting what he went after. Many people laid this down to an inordinate vanity and predicted his speedy capture. Larry claimed it was the one straight rule in a crooked game.

At first the public howled while the police raved. To the country at large it was a tremendous joke on the thick-headed minions of the law. Larry slipped through all the traps set for him like a greased pig at a country picnic.

There was one more thing which should have made Larry an easy capture. For every operation that netted him a clear ten thousand dollars he changed his name. These aliases were alliterations. The Byrd diamonds had disappeared from their resting-place in the vault by the aid of Adair Atkinson. The Commercial Security Company had been filched under the name of Barnaby Blackstone. Denny had assisted one Culberson Crothers in the matter of a few old paintings. According to Larry, it was a short cut to bookkeeping. He had only to count how many letters his name was from "A," multiply it by ten and he had the number of thousands he possessed. Anything over the ten-thousand limit and the results of his smaller operations went for cigarettes and tips.

By counting from "A" to "L" you get the figure twelve. It is thus easy to see that Larry was on velvet to the extent of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. The public, being able to solve this simple problem, arrived at the same conclusion. Their howls of laughter changed to roars of rage and like a thunderstorm on a high peak the conflict raged about the Chief of Police. No wonder, then, the grimy little sneak thief appeared to him in the guise of an angel.

* * *

LARRY was again in need of assistance and, being by nature a masterful man, preferred that his helper should be as feeble an instrument as possible. To this end he turned to the Rat, on whose unquestioned obedience he was depending.

In the Holland House every afternoon a very rich and very stingy old man could always be found. His name doesn't matter—we will call him the millionaire. In a way he, too, was nature-twisted. His money had been made by sly schemes, broken promises, betrayed friendships. His skating on the ice of the law had been wrong but not illegal. A writ had no terrors for him, but something else had. His conscience made him fearful of others, so it was that the remark of a casual stranger would send him back into his shell like a frightened mud-turtle.

He had only one failing. There reposed always in his pocket, like an amulet, a thick leather wallet, and rumor had it that this never contained a less amount than the sum necessary for Larry to choose another alias.

How the plan was to be worked the Rat had not been told. Dressed as a chauffeur, on the drop of a handkerchief he was to inform Mr. Lackmore that the car was waiting. The two, millionaire and burglar, would leave the hotel, arm in arm; they would be driven far out in the country. Here, on some pretext, he was to leave them. For this the Rat was to receive two hundred dollars. But this was the fly in the ointment. The money hinged on the contingency of the plan's being successful.

Denny had some improvements to offer. Instead of taking the direct route to the country he would circle around by the police station. It was then a simple matter for him to toot his horn and jam on the brakes. The rest of the performance interested him little.

Out in the sunlight, with the crisp rustle of bills in his pocket, the Rat sighed almost happily. What danger could there be? For once he was with the law, not against it. Its forces were at his back to help. Even Billy McShane lost something of his fearful aspect. The Chief had assured him that Larry would get at least twenty-five years, and what might not happen in twenty-five Summers and Winters?

He had long had his eye on a little tobacco-shop. The five hundred would make it his, and then there was a girl. Even if she hated him, she was a good girl and would obey her mother. Mercury, protector of nimble-fingered rogues, enveloped his head in rosy clouds.

III

IN THE Holland House one afternoon two gentlemen were seated side by side. They were evidently strangers, for they did not speak. Presently the younger one, after puffing several times on a dead cigar, asked his neighbor for a light. The millionaire, for it was he, smiled disagreeably and was about to refuse, but somehow he didn't. He searched in his pocket and brought forth a dirty little pine stick with just a tinge of red on one end. It was not much of a match as matches go. In the pocket of a millionaire it was a crying offense.

As might have been expected, the match flickered feebly and went out. The younger man turned around and talked. His words were not such as the Holland House is accustomed to hear. They were not directed toward the unoffending lucifer, but toward the man who would carry such a —— article. Larry then stalked solemnly to the cigar-stand, lighted his cigar and returned to his seat.

The millionaire was charmed. He had never had any one talk to him like that. To his mind it represented the quintessence of what he most desired—disinterestedness. The words themselves fell from his back like water from a duck's. Like Achilles, he had only the one vulnerable spot, and his heel was in his pocketbook. At last he had found a man who wanted nothing. This was no beggar for a philanthropic cause, no soft-voiced confidence man!

An apology for the match, and the two fell into conversation. The millionaire had a hobby, like most of us. Two, in fact—books and municipal improvements. He thought every city should be beautiful. To this end he would abolish the ugly. The poor and ugly going together, he would abolish the poor likewise. The laboring class could be allowed to enter the city at daybreak. Having done their work, they should be driven out.

Larry, while hating him, agreed. He went one step further; he thought all poor should be isolated in some sort of colony such as lepers have. This idea met with the millionaire's instant approval.

Over a cocktail they talked of books—Larry paying for the drinks and showing a vaster knowledge than the millionaire's own. Toward the close of the afternoon they had another drink and some cigars for which the millionaire was too slow in finding his change. The Rat, transformed into a monkey, stiffly informed Larry that "de car was woitin'." Larry graciously offered the millionaire a lift. The millionaire as gracefully accepted. It was something for nothing; why not?

In the luxury of the car, Larry momentarily allowed former suspicions to be lulled to rest; it had seemed too easy. Like many successful young men, he was too prone to self-confidence. He forgot his own teaching—in time of greatest apparent security to be most vigilant. But his eyes ached from the study of civil improvement; the Spring air was soft and balmy, holding more than a hint of radiant Summer; the macadam smelled as though freshly boiled; the car scarcely bounced at all; the millionaire's raucous voice seemed softened a little. He would be very gentle with the old man when he took his money.

The Rat, too, was not such a bad sort—sneaky, of course, and would bear watching, but he had played his part fairly well. He would give him three hundred instead of the promised two. After that he would go away. New York was no place for a gentleman in Summer. He was scarcely aware of his companion's saying, "Now, my idea of a model municipality"—or of his own vague answer when the car came to a sudden stop.

He saw the Rat leap from his seat and run to the shelter of a massive gray building, heard the millionaire's protest and felt those hands at which he had so often jeered seize him and drag him out.

Instantly his old-time alertness returned. He thought for a minute of trying to bluff it out, until he saw Denny talking with the sergeant. Then he knew he had been betrayed. He suffered peaceably the two officers to take his arms and lead him inside with only a backward glance at the avenue deepening into purple twilight, the low-bodied car panting eagerly to be off, the millionaire gesticulating wildly, and Denny, his twisted soul showing through his crooked lips, going into the Chief's office to receive his blood-money.

It takes a thief to catch a thief, and Larry was caught red-handed. All his money, won under so many fascinating nom-de-plumes, could only help. His work, however, had been clever and they could convict him on but one count. So for ten years the light of heaven was denied to Larry Lackmore. The great gate clanged for the last time on a slim, elegant figure; the prison barber shaved an aristocratic head and Larry became Number 935.

IV

THE ten years had come and gone and Denny the Rat sat sipping beer at his old table at Grogan's. The night bartender might have been, but wasn't, the same. At all events the table seemed to be. It was in it's old condition of sloppiness; flies crawled stickily over thin streams of beer; the windows were no less dirty. Outside it was wet again; gust after gust of wind and rain swept through the narrow alley.

Time had dealt gently with the Rat. He was a little more bald, a little more weasely, a little more despicable. His thinness was accentuated by a slightly protruding paunch. In other respects he remained unchanged. His calling was even the same. The water-front was still his home, drunken sailors still his prey, but the years were neither so lean nor so hard, for with the five hundred dollars he had purchased the tobacco store and the woman. The one flourished; the other lived merely because of necessity.

There entered, with a whirlwind of rain and sleet, a workingman very far gone in the matter of liquor. The barkeeper eyed Denny and Denny eyed the barkeeper; then the latter's hand strayed from his bottle of knockout drops and substituted a bottle of whisky. It seemed extravagance to waste dope on one so nearly down.

The workingman, lurching heavily, brought up against the bar, at the same time awkwardly brushing back his hat. The head thus displayed was close cropped. Denny knew what that meant and prepared to go to sleep. But the man paid for his drink out of a handful of crumpled bills. One of these, unnoticed, slid to the floor. It was a twenty. The man then pushed open the swinging doors and disappeared into the night.

Instantly Denny was after him, pausing only long enough to pick up the bill and throw it to the bartender. He would claim his share of it later, for the present duty was urging him on.

The swaying figure was far down the street before its pursuer caught up with it, and then he had to fall back. Destiny directed the wavering footsteps through lighted streets ill fitted for the black-jack nursed carefully in the Rat's pocket. But he had learned patience with age; not for a second did he allow his quarry to be lost to view. There were few people about, and these, between the rain and minding their own business, gave scant attention to the two. The chase led up one street and down another, but finally the man veered toward the harbor. Denny, seeing his time approaching, crept closer.

Denny picked out the spot on the man's head where the blow was to fall. In previous years he would have gaged its force, taking into consideration his victim's lack of hair, but while the years had brought him caution concerning his own skin it had likewise brought with it that callousness of spirit always found in those who prey upon their fellows. Between a dead man and an unconscious one there is but a slight step.

So Denny drew closer, intent on nothing but the blow. In the shadow of a dingy warehouse the man suddenly stopped, wheeled and closed with his pursuer. There was a slight scuffle, a slighter squeal of fear and rage, and the Rat found himself picked up in strong arms. With a heavy hand on his windpipe he had no choice but to obey the hoarse command for silence.

A few yards away a catboat, tied fast to the wharf, lay tossing in the water. Thither with steady steps, quite at variance with his former erratic movements, the drunken man carried his burden. Once aboard he deposited him in the cabin and without explanation sought the deck. Denny could hear the ropes being cast off, the creak of blocks, and felt the gentle swaying of the boat.

Soon the movement grew stronger and he knew they were beating out of the harbor. The night was a hard one; its force in the alley was magnified a hundredfold on the water. By peering out of a small window he could see the lights of the city gradually fade from view. Several times they passed ships anchored in the roadway and he strained his lungs to make them hear his cry for help, but none answered. The wind roughly threw the words back in his face, as contemptuously as he had listened to his victims' cries. There was something malicious about the way it forced his breath back on him, something malicious and yet disdainful, as though he were of no more account than a withered Autumn leaf.

Later, by the dangerous rocking of the little craft, he knew they were out on the ocean. Swift-driven foam cut his cheeks; spume and the fear of death forced him back to a corner where he squatted close to the floor. His twisted lips drew back over his yellow teeth for all the world like a rat in a trap. Why any one should want to kidnap him he did not know, but, remembering the wrongs he had done in the past, Denny was afraid.

AT TWELVE o'clock the catboat came to anchor. His captor descended and, having first taken his weapons, bound his eyes and led him on deck. Then he felt himself being lifted over the side. The water crept from his knees to his waist, from his waist to his shoulders. It was cold and he cried out again and again. With the water lapping his neck, the inexorable pressure downward was withdrawn. He found himself resting easily in the water, supported by his hands on the gunnel. The bandage was whipped from his eyes and Denny the Rat found himself confronted with a face he had condemned to a ten years' death!

He did not cry out again; his tongue was glued to the roof of his mouth, his brain lay dormant. In the minute they looked into each other's eyes he could think of nothing but the change wrought in the countenance above him. The sharp features, clean-cut as a thoroughbred's, had broadened and coarsened. In place of the cool tolerance through which Larry had viewed the world there was a bigoted passion for one idea. The lips were as thin as before, but the years of imprisonment had straightened their bow. If anything, they curved downward with a cruel sweep. Wrinkles of laughter had been replaced by creases of suffering, the unnecessary suffering that sours the heart. Between them, Denny and the prison had achieved a miracle—they had turned a man into a beast.

"Denny," said Larry at length, and the Rat trembled more at the sound of that half-forgotten voice than he had at the touch of the cold water, "here is where you and I square accounts. If I punished you as you deserved, you'd die by slow torture. Drowning is an easy death, they say." He clutched the thin shoulders and, twisting him fiercely around, pointed to some lights in the distance.

"That is shore," said Larry. "It is three miles away and you can't make it in this sea. You swim on and on and on. At first it won't be so hard, but later with every stroke you will sink lower in the water. Your arms will weaken first, then your legs. You will turn on your back and float, but always you will grow weaker. Every second of the time you will think. You'll remember each time you have seen me from the first to the last. You will recall I always treated you square. The faces of the men you have knocked on the head will haunt you and then, my dear friend Denny, water will creep up and into your mouth! You will sputter and struggle, maybe even scream a little. Your chest will split with agony and then, dear, dear Denny, you will go down, down to hell where you belong!"

He thrust the Rat's hands off and, lying flat downward on the deck, watched the swimmer being swallowed up in the darkness. While he was still a vague blot on the water, Larry made a trumpet with his hands and called after him, "And remember, Denny, the *Baltic* sails to-night!"

As for Denny he swam easily and chuckled to himself at the thought of what a great fool Larry was. Three miles to shore! Hadn't he seen the lights themselves? Three miles in a rough sea was nothing to one born on the docks. Prison had crazed Larry; there was no other explanation. When he landed he would buy dry clothes, have Billy McShane, now a sergeant, arrest his enemy and he, the Rat, would live long and prosper.

HE SWAM for an hour, pleased with these thoughts, then, rearing high in the water, looked toward the lights. In spite of the distance he had come they looked no nearer. The night must be getting misty or he must have water in his eyes. He rubbed them carefully and, after a short spell on his back, treaded water. Surely the lights were farther off now than before! His craven heart fluttered fiercely and in a panic he raced along. Winded, he finally brought up and set himself steadily and powerfully to overtake the lights.

His muscles still worked rhythmically; the years had done little to impair his powers. His mind reverted to Larry. What was it the fool had said about dead men mocking him? Men *he* hit never came back! With his black-jack he could crush their skulls like an eggshell! "Dead men tell no tales" was his motto, and if they told no tales, surely they could not come back. But what else had Larry said? Oh, yes! That he would think over every time they had been together from first to last. This was easy, he could number them on the fingers of one hand.

The first time had been at Grogan's and the second at Atlantic City, when they had attached those priceless antiques. Every morning they had taken a dip in the ocean, swimming far out to sea. One of the lifeguards had told them they usually covered six miles, and here was Larry trying to drown him in half that distance! Then for some reason his thoughts shifted to the last time he had seen Larry, lying face downward on the deck and megaphoning his last words to him through his hands. At the remembrance of that, the Rat threw up his hands and screamed hoarsely. No wonder the lights were fading!

He had set himself to overtake an ocean liner!

But such is the love we bear for life that Denny the Rat, totally without hope, swam on and on.

BREAD and SALT

BY EDWARD CROSSLAND SMITH

VINCENT came into the dining-room with such a calamitous expression on his full-moon face that one accustomed, as I was, to his habitual radiance could not ignore it. He sank into the chair opposite, and gave an order for soft boiled eggs and coffee.

"Is there a competent dentist in this place?" he inquired dejectedly.

I named one of good repute in the calling. "Toothache, I suppose?"

"Loose filling. I suppose I'll have to live on liquid diet now, until it's fixed. You see," he complained, as his ascetic breakfast was put before him, "I've been eating dry toast to keep down fat, and I'll have to cut that out until this tooth is fixed. You can't eat dry toast with a loose filling rattling around in your tooth like a roulette-ball when the wheel slows down."

I conceded the point, and reverted to the business in hand. "When we get out there to-day," I counselled, "don't just take Black's word for everything. Make some soundings for yourself."

Instantly his native optimism came to the front, and the clouds began to disappear. "You're soured, George," he returned lightly. "They haven't all had your luck. Besides, how on earth can they salt a placer mine? It's preposterous!"

"I don't know," I replied doggedly. "I don't know whether they can or whether they can't. All that I am laboring to get into your head is that you can't believe all Black says. Mind, I don't say that Black ever did salt a mine. But I do know that he sold a couple of bonanzas to Easterners like you and by some mysterious law of Nature they ceased to produce just about as soon as the purchase price was paid over."

Vincent nodded indulgently. "Quartz. Any fool can salt a quartz mine—shoot it in with a shotgun, mix it in the dump, squirt chloride of gold into the sample sack with a syringe—forty ways. That's easy. But now you talk to me about salting a placer—where you just shovel up the dirt and pan it out—acres and acres of it. I say it's out of the question."

Vincent had made his money in the East in commerce, and a man that can do that without help, as he had, is ordinarily able to take care of himself. On the other hand, this was Montana and gold mines, and, be a man's business ability what it may, any Easterner is a tenderfoot when it comes to mining. It was no fault of mine that he had fallen under Black's spell, though I did introduce Vincent in the club where Black got to him. But the man who has suffered himself from the mining fever—and I had—feels an obligation to protect the unwary from exposure. Moreover, as Vincent had done me a good turn once, I conceived it my duty to throw cold water.

"Placer mining is not what it used to be," I stated disparagingly.

But my shot went wild. He began to spout statistics like an eruption of Old Faithful. "Of course not!" he assented with animation. "Neither are methods what they were. The old-timer with his pan and sluice-box let enough gold escape him to pay the national debt. Look at the fortunes that have been made by cyaniding the old dumps! Look at the low-grade ore they work these days! Look at the old placers worked over for the third time at a profit! Why, do you know how much you need to make placer ground pay now under improved methods? Ten cents a yard, in the right places! Twenty-five cents is big. Give me a piece of ground that runs twenty-five cents to the yard and I'll make a fortune. Your old-time prospector wouldn't fool with ground that didn't run five cents a shovel. Generally they wanted about ten dollars to the pan."

"Oh, if you've got the ground——" I began.

He made a sweep with his egg-spoon that left golden traces on the white tablecloth. "Ground! That's the point. Black says there's oodles of it. He says it runs forty cents to the yard as far as he has tried it. That's all I want."

"Yes, that's what Black says," I returned grudgingly, unwilling to yield. "I've had a little experience with mines myself, and I've seen a few of them sold that——"

Again he stopped me. "Quartz," he repeated serenely and exasperatingly. "And furthermore, George," he continued with dignity, rising from the table, "I am perhaps not a complete ass, despite the fact that I wasn't born west of the Mississippi!"

THROUGH the windows a big touring-car could be seen lazily rolling up to the curb at the hotel entrance. "There they are," remarked Vincent with a sigh of relief. "Get your coat and we'll be going."

I maneuvered Black into the front seat with the driver. I hadn't yet resigned my trust as guardian angel, even if the job was a thankless one, and I didn't propose to leave Vincent with Black where I couldn't hear all that was said. So Black was forced to lean over his seat and expound his theories in the face of my openly exhibited skepticism. He treated Vincent to a highly scientific disquisition on placers, full of such phrases as "mother lode in the neighborhood," "old river channel," "pay streaks," "volcanic upheavals," and something about "only a foot and a half to bed-rock," while I assumed a look of exquisite boredom, as one to whom it was all ancient and stale.

The day was such as is seen only in the high altitudes of the Rockies—a clear June morning filled with the tang of pure air, dry and cool. The car sped faultlessly over the hard, smooth road. On such a day even my settled habit of suspicion slowly yielded to my sensuous appreciation of the weather and the environment. "Gold is where you find it," sayeth the proverb. The fact that I had failed was no evidence that Black hadn't found it. Plenty of others had.

About noon we reached the river and the placer ground. A little stream of crystal water raced madly down between two mountains and debouched upon a flat too suddenly to select its own course, and was broken and spread out into a wide estuary of numberless tiny rivulets between flat, black sand-bars with surfaces almost flush with the water and level as billiard-tables. At the junction with the river these bars were gradually submerged, but for a considerable distance downstream the left bank was filled in with the same character of deposit.

Black got out first and removed a pan and shovel from the bottom of the car. "This is the place," he said, waving his arm toward the sand-bars. "Fred, you run the car over to Miller's and see if you can get some gasoline from him. I'm afraid we're short. Come back here for us."

We climbed out and Vincent surveyed the expanse with delight in his eyes, calculating its extent.

"All the land you can use," said Black, replying to Vincent's look. "And a riverful of water to work it—and no expense for pumping."

"Has it all been tested—prospected?" asked Vincent, nodding toward a couple of shallow holes in the bar opposite.

Black shook his head. "By no means. Haven't had the time for it. But you can see for yourself the formation is the same all over the flat. What holds good for one part of it must hold good for it all. Come, and I'll show you."

He stepped across the little stream at his feet and advanced to the middle of the bar. We followed him. The driver had already turned his car about and disappeared behind the shoulder of a hill. Black confidently thrust his shovel into the sand and dumped the contents into the wash-pan. This he carried to the water's edge and half filled with water, which he proceeded to slush this way and that, spilling it out now and then with the mud and gravel, and continuing the motion until all of the water and most of the dirt had been poured away.

"See here!" he said at last, holding up the pan.

He pointed to some tiny, yellowish particles at the lower edge of the black dirt remaining in the pan. It was perhaps as much as five cents in gold.

"But," he added, "that isn't saying that's all there was in the pan. Washing with a pan is the most primitive of methods. Now let's see what we get here."

He made several trials, six in all, I believe. Five out of the six showed colors. Not one of the washings produced as much as twenty-five cents in gold—and that wasn't expected—but on the whole the showing was good and Vincent was plainly impressed. I saw that it was no longer a question of his buying, but simply one of price. We returned to dry ground, found a comfortable seat under a scrub pine, and they began to discuss terms.

"IF YOU all are going to sit here and dicker," I said, "I am going to take a walk about and stretch my legs."

I had a little plan of my own and I wanted to see that chauffeur. It was a good mile to the farmhouse whither he had gone, and after I had seen him and transacted my business I returned to the scene of the bargaining.

"Fred says there's something out of whack with that machine," I announced as I came up to them.

Black's eyebrows contracted with annoyance. "Let him fix it, then!" he answered irritably.

"He says he can't do it," I informed him.

"Why, what in thunder is the matter?" he demanded.

"That's more than I know," said I, sitting down. "I'm not a mechanic."

He got up in great disgust and began to dust his trousers. "Well, I'll be everlastingly and eternally—I wonder what that kid thinks he's fit for, anyway! The car was all right this morning. We'll have to go over there and see what's the trouble, I suppose."

I deliberately took my pipe from my pocket and filled it. "I am supposing I'm not going to walk that mile again!" I said with finality. "I've got a prickly-pear needle sticking a full inch into my foot, and I've decided to wait here. You can come back this way for me. I'll be here."

He favored me with a side-long scowl, and I could see he didn't like it. "Would you like to walk over, Vincent?" he suggested.

Under cover of my hands raised to light my pipe, I gave Vincent a wink and he declined the suggestion, and after a little further fretting Black was compelled to set off by himself.

I gave him plenty of time to get out of sight and hearing. Then I took up the pan and shovel myself.

"We'll do a little prospecting on our own hook!" I laughed. "I thought I'd manage to get rid of him somehow."

I chose a spot some distance from where Black had taken his dirt. We filled the pan and washed it out. We got nothing.

"However, that really doesn't prove anything," said Vincent hopefully.

"Not a thing," I admitted, and dug up another panful. This time we got two little colors, almost microscopic and of no calculable value. I shifted ground and washed again. No showing.

"Do you know what I begin to believe, Vincent?" I said.

"Yes. But you might be off the pay-streak, you know."

Like Hamlet and his friends we once more removed our ground. "I thought I knew our friend Black pretty well!" I chuckled. Again I heaved the black sand into the pan and dipped up water and swished it about and spilled it over the rim, while Vincent leaned over my shoulder and watched intently.

"Let me have it." he urged finally. "You go at it too carelessly."

I resigned the pan to him, and stood aside while he scooped up more water and carefully slopped it over the brim, a spoonful at a time. I thought he would never have done. Tired at length with standing still, I took a turn up and down the bars. I tried to find evidence on the surface of the ground, but the bars all lay so low that the least rise in the creek would overflow them, and search was useless. Passing by Vincent on my still hunt I heard him suddenly catch his breath, and stopped to see what was the matter.

"Suffering Sassafras!" he ejaculated awesomely. "Come, look here, George!"

I looked, and just peeping up out of the handful of mud left in the pan I beheld the smooth, yellow top of a gold nugget as big as a pea! With tremulous fingers Vincent picked it out and contemplated it with rapture. Finally he handed it over to me. It was a good nugget, pure gold, and worth two dollars at the least!

"I take it all back, Vincent," I said. "That's 'the real thing, Annie.' Nobody salted *that* here! I reckon this is a placer claim all right."

"Let's hurry up and see if we can find any more before Black gets back!" proposed Vincent, grabbing the pan. "Why, this may be another Alder Gulch!"

JUST then the chugging of the machine came to our ears. For a moment Vincent hesitated, then gave it up. "We haven't time," he murmured disappointedly, bending down to wash the pan clean. Then we went back to the dry ground again, regaining our place just as the car rounded the hill. I still held the precious nugget in my hand.

"Put that thing in your pocket!" Vincent commanded excitedly. "For heaven's sake don't let Black see it! He'd triple the price of this land. And keep quiet about it, too!"

Black himself was driving the auto, the driver having been relegated to the back seat in disgrace. I knew why.

"Nothing in the world the matter but a spark-plug blown out!" Black explained wrathfully as he brought the car to a stop. "Any fool ought to know how to fix that!"

Vincent and Black sat together on the way back and sparred for points all the way in. The agreement was eventually reached just a short way from town by a concession on Black's part, which I am certain he was ready to yield all the time rather than not make the sale.

At the hotel we parted, Black going to find his attorney to prepare the necessary documents. Vincent was elated. The day in the open had given us both splendid appetites and we had a sumptuous dinner. Vincent threw all his dietary injunctions to the four winds and ate like a wolf. When we finally got down to the cheese and water-crackers he sighed like a young simoon and announced that he would have to fast for a month to get back into shape.

"But I did a good piece of work to-day, George," he remarked, by way of justification, at the same time adding a piece of cheese and bite of bread to the burden. His mouth closed upon the morsel appreciatively while a wave of gastronomic delight spread itself from chin to eyebrows. My amused study of his perfect satisfaction, however, was rudely disturbed when he suddenly leaped to his feet and clapped his hand to his cheek, his whole countenance twisted in a spasm of pain.

"Crucified Cuspidores!" he yelled in a voice that filled the room.

"Why, what on earth?" I inquired in surprise.

Without answering he made a sudden dart for the door. Half-way there he wheeled and as suddenly rushed back to me. "What's Black's 'phone number?" he cried wildly.

"I don't know. Ask the clerk. What's the matter?"

He took his hand from his mouth. "Matter enough! That magnificent, transcendant, potential, glimmering gold-mine of ours is nothing more than a vainglorious, inflated burlesque and fraud! That's what's the matter!"

I was bewildered. "What makes you think that?"

With an effort he regained his composure and resumed his seat. "Anyway, I can call the deal off when he comes here to-night," he said. "The reason why I think it," he added sullenly, "is because that nugget we thought so much of is nothing more nor less than the filling out of my tooth!"

"The filling of your tooth!" I echoed incredulously.

"Just that! And we thought it was a gold-mine! That filling was loose this morning. Must have slipped out of the cavity while I was staring like a petrified catfish with its mouth open at you washing out that mud to-day!"

I drew the supposed nugget from my pocket and inspected it. He was correct. The precious lump upon which we had predicated a gold mine was merely a dentist's filling. Under an enlightened scrutiny its shape betrayed the previous character of its servitude.

"I'll call the deal off," repeated Vincent determinedly. "What do I want with his desert of black sand? I'll show your friend how he'll salt mud-geysers and buffalo-wallows and what-not and shove 'em off on me for gold-mines!"

A bell-boy appeared at the entrance to the dining-room, glanced about the tables and loudly called, "Vincent!"

Vincent hastily drew back from the table. "That's Black, now!" he exclaimed. "I'll favor that gentleman with a statement of my opinion of the ethics of this little game of his!"

I finished my coffee, and in a few moments followed him. I located him and Black in the deserted writing-room, Vincent very warm and scowling, Black quite composed and smiling. The promoter of bonanzas fingered a little slip of paper as he spoke:

"You seemed rather anxious to secure the property on the way in to-day," he was saying, with a mocking note in his voice. "Here is a little memorandum of the terms of sale that we made out for the lawyers' guidance."

"But the whole thing is a blame fraud!" retorted Vincent hotly. "I was buying that for a gold-mine. And it turns out that what I took to be placer gold was just a tooth-filling! What do you suppose I want with that sand-bar unless it's what I took it to be?"

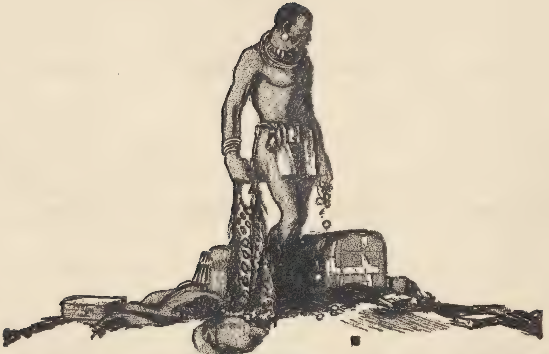
Black rose with the air of a man weary of discussion. "I am sure I can't say, Mr. Vincent," he returned coolly. "I only know that I have here your signed agreement to buy the property at the price stated. In our State that is sufficient to enforce the carrying out of the contract—which I shall certainly do, by suit at law, if necessary. And here," he concluded, placing a neatly folded document on the settee, "is your deed, properly executed. I wish you good-evening and good luck!" And he passed out of the hotel.

I turned to Vincent, who had picked up the deed. He shrugged his shoulders. "My own fault," he murmured. "I suspected he was tricky, and I wanted something to hold him, so I suggested that infernal memorandum. Confound that tooth!"

HOWEVER, as has been remarked by others, Dame Fortune is a fickle lady who sometimes jests as she turns the wheel. Winners are not winners till the game is all played, and lottery prizes go by chance, not favor.

"I notice," I remarked, laying aside the newspaper as Black came into the club a few days since, "that Vincent has just made another big clean-up at that placer mine you sold him last Summer."

He favored me with such a scowl as he might have given me had I stepped on his favorite corn. "Oh, ——!" he growled, and went on into the bar.



PRESTER JOHN*

by JOHN BUCHAN

CHAPTER XXVIII

MY LAST SIGHT OF THE REVEREND JOHN LAPUTA

IT WAS dark before I got into the gorge of the Letaba. I passed many patrols, but few people spoke to me and none tried to stop me. Some may have known me, but I think it was my face and figure that tied their tongues. I must have been pale as death, with tangled hair, and fever burning in my eyes. Also on the left temple was the splash of blood.

At Main Drift I found a big body of police holding the fort. I splashed through and stumbled into one of their camp-fires. A man questioned me and told me that Arcoll had got his quarry. "He's dead, they say. They shot him out on the hills when he was making for the Limpopo." But I knew that this was not true. It was burned on my mind that Laputa was alive, nay, was waiting for me, and that it was God's will that we should meet in the Cave.

A little later I struck the track of the Kaffir's march. There was a broad, trampled way through the bush, and I followed it, for it led to Dupree's Drift. All this time I was urging the *schimmel* with all the vigor I had left in me. I had quite lost any remnant of fear. There were no terrors left for me. At Dupree's Drift I rode the ford without a thought of crocodiles. I looked placidly at the spot where Henriques had slain the Keeper and I had stolen the rubies. There was no interest or imagination lingering in my dull brain. My nerves had suddenly become things of stolid iron.

At Umvelos' I had not the leisure to do more than glance at the shell which I had built. I think I had forgotten all about that night when I lay in the cellar and heard Laputa's plans. Indeed, my doings of the past days were all hazy and trivial in my mind. I saw only one sight clearly—two men, one tall and black, the other little and sallow, slowly creeping nearer to the Rooi-

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rand, and myself, a midget on a horse, spurring far behind through the bush on their trail.

I had no exhilaration in my quest. I do not think I had even much hope, for something had gone numb and cold in me and killed my youth. I told myself that treasure-hunting was an enterprise accursed by God, and that I should most likely die. That Laputa and Henriques would die I was fully certain. The three of us would leave our bones to bleach among the diamonds. and in a little while the Prester's Collar would glow amid a little heap of human dust. I was quite convinced of all this, and quite apathetic. It really did not matter so long as I came up with Laputa and Henriques, and settled scores with them. That mattered everything in the world, for it was my destiny.

I had no means of knowing how long I took, but it was after midnight before I passed Umvelos', and ere I got to the Rooriand there was a fluttering of dawn in the east. I must have passed east of Arcoll's men, who were driving the bush towards Majinje's. I had ridden the night down and did not feel so very tired. My horse was stumbling, but my own limbs scarcely pained me. To be sure, I was stiff and nerveless as if hewn out of wood, but I had been as bad when I left Bruderstoon. I felt as if I could go on riding to the end of the world.

At the brink of the bush I dismounted and turned the *schimmel* loose. I had brought no halter and I wanted him to graze and roll. The light was sufficient to let me see the great rock-face rising in a tower of dim purple. The sky was still picked out with stars, but the moon had long gone down and the east was flushing. I marched up the path to the Cave, very different from the timid being who had walked the same road three nights before. Then my terrors were all to come; now I had conquered the terror and seen the other side of fear. I was centuries older.

BUT beside the path lay something which made me pause. It was a dead body, and the head was turned away from me. I did not need to see the face to know who it was. There had been only two men in my vision and one of them was immortal.

I stopped and turned the body over. There was no joy in my heart, none of the lust of satisfied vengeance or slaked hate. I had forgotten about the killing of my dog and all the rest of Henriques' doings. It was only with curiosity that I looked down on the dead face, swollen and livid in the first light of morning.

The man had been strangled. His neck, as we say in Scotland, was "thrawn," and that was why he had lain on his back, yet with his face turned away from me. I looked closer and saw that there was blood on his shirt and hands, but no wound. It was not his blood, but some other's. He had been dead probably since before midnight. Then, a few feet off on the path, I found a pistol with two chambers empty.

What had happened was very plain. Henriques had tried to shoot Laputa at the entrance of the Cave for the sake of the Collar and the treasure within. He had wounded him—gravely, I thought, to judge from the amount of blood—but the quickness and marksmanship of the Portuguese had not availed to save his life from those terrible hands. After two shots Laputa had got hold of him and choked his life out as easily as a man twists a partridge's neck! Then he had gone in to the Cave.

I saw the marks of blood on the road and hastened on. Laputa had been hours in the Cave, enough to work havoc with the treasure. He was wounded, too, and desperate. Probably he had come to the Rooirand, looking for sanctuary and rest for a day or two, but, if Henriques had shot straight, he might find a safer sanctuary and a longer rest. For the third time in my life I pushed up the gully between the straight high walls of rock and heard from the heart of the hills the thunder of the imprisoned river.

The hidden turnstile in the right wall stood ajar. I entered and carelessly swung it behind me. The gates clashed into place with a finality that told me they were firmly shut. I did not know the secret of them, so how should I get out again?

These things troubled me less than the fact that I had no light at all now. I had to go on my knees to ascend the stair, and I could feel that the steps were wet. It must be Laputa's blood.

Next I was out on the gallery that skirted the chasm. The sky above me was growing pale with dawn, and, far below, the tossing waters were fretted with light. A light, fragrant wind was blowing on the hills, and a breath of it came down the funnel. I saw that my hands were all bloody with the stains on the steps, and I rubbed them on the rock to clean them. Without a tremor I crossed the stone slab over the gorge and plunged into the dark alley that led to the inner chamber.

As before, there was a light in front of me, but this time it was a pin-point and not the glare of many torches. I felt my way carefully by the walls of the passage, though I did not really fear anything. It was only by the stopping of these lateral walls that I knew I was in the Cave, for the place had only one single speck of light. The falling wall of water stood out gray-green and ghostly on the left, and I noticed that higher up it was lit as if from the open air. I walked a few paces and then I made out that the spark in front was a lantern.

My eyes were getting used to the half-light, and I saw what was beside the lantern. Laputa knelt on the ashes of the fire the Keeper had kindled three days before. He knelt before, and half leaned on, a rude altar of stone. The lantern stood by him on the floor and its faint circle showed something I was not unprepared for. Blood was welling from his side and spreading in a dark pool over the ashes.

I HAD no fear, only a great pity—pity for the lost romance, for vain endeavor, for fruitless courage. "Greeting, Inkulu!" I said in Kaffir, as if I had been one of his *Indunas*.

He turned his head and slowly and painfully rose to his feet. The place, it was clear, was lit from without and the daylight was growing. The wall of the river had become a sheet of jewels, passing from pellucid diamond above to the translucent emerald below. A dusky twilight sought out the extreme corners of the Cave. Laputa's tall figure stood swaying above the white ashes, his hand pressed to his side.

"Who is it?" he said, looking at me with blind eyes.

"It is the storekeeper from Umvelos'," I answered.

"The storekeeper of Umvelos'," he repeated. "God has used the weak things of the world to confound the strong. A king dies because a pedler is troublesome. What do they call you, man? You deserve to be remembered."

I told him, "David Crawfurd."

"Crawfurd. Well, Crawfurd, you have been the little reef on which a great vessel has foundered. You stole the Collar and cut me off from my people, and then when I was weary the Portuguese killed me."

"No," I cried, "it was not I! You trusted Henriques and you got your fingers on his neck too late. Don't say I didn't warn you."

"You warned me and I shall repay you. I will make you rich, Crawfurd. You are a trader and want money. I am a king and want a throne. But I am dying and there will be no more kings in Africa."

The mention of riches did not thrill me as I had expected, but the last words awakened a wild regret. I was hypnotized by the man. To see him going out was like seeing the fall of a great mountain.

He stretched himself, gasping, and in the growing light I could see how broken he was. His cheeks were falling in, and his somber eyes had shrunk back in their sockets. He seemed an old, worn man standing there among the ashes, while the blood, which he made no effort to stanch, trickled down his side till it dripped on the floor. He had ceased to be the Kaffir king or the Christian minister, or indeed any one of his former parts. Death was stripping him to his elements, and the man Laputa stood out beyond and above the characters he had played, something strange and great and moving and terrible.

"We met for the first time three days ago," he said, "and now you will be the last to see the Inkulu."

"Umvelos' was not our first meeting," I said. "Do you mind the Sabbath eight years since when you preached in the Free Kirk at Kirkcaple? I was the boy you chased from the shore, and I flung the stone that blacked your eye. Besides, I came out from England with you and Henriques and I was in the boat which took you from Durban to Delagoa Bay. You and I have been long acquainted, Mr. Laputa."

"It is the hand of God," he said solemnly. "Your fate has been twisted with mine, and now you will die with me."

I did not understand this talk about dying. I was not mortally wounded like him, and I did not think Laputa had the strength to kill me even if he wished. But my mind was so impassive that I scarcely regarded his words.

"I will make you rich," he cried. "Crawfurd, the storekeeper, will be the richest man in Africa. We are scattered and our wealth is another's. He shall have the gold and the diamonds—all but the Collar, which goes with me!"

He staggered into a dark recess, one of many in the Cave, and I followed him. There were boxes there, tea-chests, cartridge-cases and old brass-ribbed Portuguese coffers. Laputa had keys at his belt, and unlocked them, his fingers fumbling with weakness. I peered in and saw gold coin and little bags of stones.

"Money and diamonds!" he cried. "Once it was the war-chest of a king, and now it will be the hoard of a trader! No! by the Lord! The trader's place is with the Terrible Ones!" An arm shot out and my shoulder was fiercely gripped. "You stole my horse! That is why I am dying. But for you I and my army would be over the Olifants! I am going to kill you, Crawfurd!" And his fingers closed in to my shoulder-blades.

Still I was unperturbed. "No, you are not. You can not. You have tried to and failed. So did Henriques, and he is lying dead outside. I am in God's keeping and can not die before my time."

I do not know whether he heard me, but at any rate the murderous fit passed. His hand fell to his side and his great figure tottered out into the cave. He seemed to be making for the river, but he turned and went through the door I had entered by. I heard him slipping in the passage, and then there was a minute of silence.

Suddenly there came a grinding sound, followed by the kind of muffled splash that a stone makes when it falls into a deep well. I thought Laputa had fallen into the chasm, but when I reached the door his swaying figure was coming out of the corridor. Then I knew what he had done. He had used the remnant of his giant strength to break down the bridge of stone across the gorge and so cut off my retreat!

I REALLY did not care. Even if I had got over the bridge I should probably have been foiled by the shut turnstile. I had quite forgotten the meaning of fear of death. I found myself giving my arm to the man who had tried to destroy me.

"I have laid up for you treasure in heaven," he said. "Your earthly treasure is in the boxes, but soon you will be seeking incorruptible jewels in the deep, deep water. It is cool and quiet down there, and you forget the hunger and pain."

The man was getting very near his end. The madness of despair came back to him and he flung himself among the ashes.

"We are going to die together, Crawfurd!" he said. "God has twined our threads, and there will be only one cutting! Tell me what has become of my army?"

"Arcoll has guns on the Wolksberg," I said. "They must submit or perish."

"I have other armies—no, no, they are nothing! They will all wander and blunder and fight and be beaten. There is no leader anywhere—and I am dying!"

There was no gainsaying the signs of death. I asked him if he would like water, but he made no answer. His eyes were fixed on vacancy, and I thought I could realize something of the bitterness of that great regret. For myself, I was as cold as a stone. I had no exultation of triumph, still less any fear of my own fate. I stood silent, the half-remorseful spectator of a fall like the fall of Lucifer.

"I would have taught the world wisdom." Laputa was speaking English in a strange, thin, abstracted voice. "There would have been no king like me since Charlemagne!" and he strayed into Latin, which I have been told since was an adaptation of the Epitaph of Charles the Great. "*Sub hoc conditorio,*" he crooned, "*situm est corpus Joannis, magni et orthodoxi Imperatoris, qui imperium Africanum nobiliter ampliavit, et multos per annos mundum feliciter rexit.*" ["Under this monument is laid the body of John, great and orthodox Emperor, who nobly extended the Empire of Africa and ruled the world happily for many years."] He must have chosen this epitaph long ago.

He lay for a few seconds with his head on his arms, his breast heaving with agony.

"No one will come after me. My race is doomed, and in a little they will have forgotten my name. I alone could have saved them. Now they go the way of the rest, and the warriors of John become drudges and slaves!"

Something clicked in his throat, he gasped and fell forward, and I thought he was dead. Then he struggled as if to rise. I ran forward and with all my strength aided him to his feet.

"Unarm!" he cried. "The long day's task is done!" With the strange power of a dying man he tore off his leopard-skin and belt till he stood stark as on the night when he had been crowned. From his pouch he took the Prester's Collar. Then he staggered to the brink of the chasm where the wall of green water dropped into the dark depth below.

I watched, fascinated, as with the weak hands of a child he twined the rubies round his neck and joined the clasp. Then with a last effort he stood straight up on the brink, his eyes raised to the belt of daylight from which the water fell. The light caught the great gems and called fires from them, the flames of the funeral pyre of a king.

Once more his voice, restored for a moment to its old vigor, rang out through the cave above the din of the cascade. His words were those the Keeper had used three nights before. With his hands held high and the Collar burning on his neck he cried, "The Snake returns to the House of its Birth!"

"Come!" he cried to me. "The Heir of John is going home!"

Then he leaped into the gulf. There was no sound of falling, so great was the rush of water. He must have been whirled into the open, below where the bridge used to be, and then swept into the underground deeps, where the Labonga drowses for fifty miles. Far from human quest he sleeps his last sleep, and perchance on a fragment of bone washed into a crevice of rock there may hang the jewels that once gleamed in Sheba's hair.

CHAPTER XXIX

I CLIMB THE CRAGS A SECOND TIME

I REMEMBER that I looked over the brink into the yeasty abyss with a mind hovering between perplexity and tears. I wanted to sit down and cry—why, I did not know, except that some great thing had happened. My brain was quite clear as to my own position. I was shut in in this place with no chance of escape and with no food. In a little while I must die of starvation or go mad and throw myself after Laputa. And yet I did not care a rush. My nerves had been tried too greatly in the past week. Now I was comatose, and beyond hoping or fearing.

I sat for a long time watching the light play on the fretted sheet of water and wondering where Laputa's body had gone. I shivered and wished he had not left me alone, for the darkness would come in time and I had no matches. After a little I got tired of doing nothing and went feeling among the treasure-chests. One or two were full of coin—British sovereigns, Kruger sovereigns, Napoleons, Spanish and Portuguese gold-pieces, and many older coins ranging back to the Middle Ages and even to the ancients. In one handful there was a splendid gold stater and in another a piece of Antoninus Pius. The treasure had been collected for many years in many places, contributions of chiefs from ancient hoards as well as the cash received from I. D. B.

I untied one or two of the little bags of stones and poured the contents into my hands. Most of the diamonds were small, such as a laborer might secrete on his person. The larger ones—and some were very large—were as a rule discolored, looking more like big cairngorms. But one or two bags had big stones which even my inexperienced eye told me were of the purest water. There must be some new pipe, I thought, for these could not have been stolen from any known mine.

After that I sat on the floor again and looked at the water. It exercised a mesmeric influence on me, soothing all care. I was quite happy to wait for death, for death had no meaning to me. My hate and fury were both lulled into a trance, since the passive is the next stage to the overwrought.

It must have been full day outside now, for the funnel was bright with sunshine, and even the dim cave caught a reflected radiance. As I watched the river I saw a bird flash downward, skimming the water. It turned into the cave and fluttered among its dark recesses. I heard its wings beating the roof as it sought wildly for an outlet. It dashed into the spray of the cataract and escaped again into the cave. For maybe twenty minutes it fluttered, till at last it found the way it had entered by. With a dart it sped up the funnel of rock into light and freedom.

I had begun to watch the bird in idle lassitude; I ended in keen excitement. The sight of it seemed to take a film from my eyes. I realized the zest of liberty, the passion of life again. I felt that beyond this dim underworld there was the great joyous earth, and I longed for it. I wanted to live now.

My memory cleared and I remembered all that had befallen me during the last few days. I had played the chief part in the whole business, and I had won! Laputa was dead and the treasure was mine, while Arcoll was crushing the Rising at his ease. I had only to be free again to be famous and rich. My hopes had returned, but with them came my fears. What if I could not escape? I must perish miserably by degrees, shut in the heart of a hill, though my friends were out for rescue! I was now in a fever of unrest.

MY FIRST care was to explore the way I had come. I ran down the passage to the chasm which the slab of stone had spanned. I had been right in my guess, for the thing was gone. Laputa was, in truth, a titan, who in the article of death could break down a bridge that would have taken any three men an hour to shift. The gorge was about seven yards wide, too far to risk a jump, and the cliff fell sheer and smooth to the imprisoned waters two hundred feet below. There was no chance of circuiting it, for the wall was as smooth as if it had been chiseled. The hand of man had been at work to make the sanctuary inviolable.

It occurred to me that sooner or later Arcoll would track Laputa to this place. He would find the blood-stains in the gully, but the turnstile would be shut and he would never find the trick of it. Nor could he have any Kaffirs with him who knew the secret of the Place of the Snake. Still, if Arcoll knew I was inside he would find some way to get to me even though he had to dynamite the curtain of rock. I shouted, but my voice seemed to be drowned in the roar of the water. It made but a fresh chord in the wild orchestra, and I gave up hopes in that direction.

Very dolefully I returned to the cave. I was about to share the experience of all treasure-hunters—to be left with jewels galore and not a bite to sustain life. The thing was too commonplace to be endured. I grew angry and declined so obvious a fate. I had come through worse dangers, and a way I should find. To starve in the cave was no ending for David Crawfurd. Far better to join Laputa in the depths in a manly hazard for liberty!

My obstinacy and irritation cheered me. What had become of the lack-luster young fool who had mooned here a few minutes back? Now I was as tense and strung for effort as the day I had ridden from Blaauwildebeestefontein to Umvolos'. I felt like a runner in the last lap of a race. For four days I had lived in the midst of terror and darkness. Daylight was only a few steps ahead, daylight and youth restored and a new world.

There were only two outlets from that cave—the way I had come and the way the river came. The first was closed, the second a sheer, staring impossibility. I had been into every niche and cranny, and there was no sign of a passage. I sat down on the floor and looked at the wall of water. It fell, as I have already explained, in a solid sheet, which made up the whole of the wall of the cave. Higher than the roof of the cave I could not see what happened, except that it must be the open air, for the sun was shining on it. The water was about three yards distant from the edge of the cave's floor, but it seemed to me that high up this distance decreased to little more than a foot.

I could not see what the walls of the cave were like, but they looked smooth and difficult. Supposing I managed to climb up to the level of the roof close to the water, how on earth was I to get outside on to the wall of the ravine? I knew from my old days of rock-climbing what a complete obstacle the overhang of a cave is.

While I looked, however, I saw a thing I had not noticed before. On the left side of the fall the water sluiced down in a sheet to the extreme edge of the cave, almost sprinkling the floor with water. But on the right side the force of water was obviously weaker, and a little short of the level of the cave roof there was a spike of rock which slightly broke the fall. The spike was covered, but the covering was shallow, for the current flowed from it in a rose-shaped spray. If a man could get to that spike and could get a foot on it without being swept down, it might be possible—just possible—to do something with the well of the chasm above the cave. Of course I knew nothing about the nature of that well. It might be as smooth as a polished pillar.

THE result of these cogitations was that I decided to prospect the right wall of the cave close to the waterfall. But first I went rummaging in the back part to see if I could find anything to assist me. In one corner there was a rude cupboard with some stone and metal vessels. Here, too, were the few domestic utensils of the dead Keeper. In another were several locked coffers on which I could make no impression. There were the treasure-chests, too, but they held nothing save treasure, and gold and diamonds were no manner of use to me. Other odds and ends I found—spears, a few skins, and a broken and notched ax. I took the ax in case there might be cutting to do.

Then at the back of a bin my hand struck something that brought the blood to my face. It was a rope, an old one, but still in fair condition and forty or fifty feet long. I dragged it out into the light and straightened out its kinks. With this something could be done, assuming I could cut my way to the level of the roof.

I began to climb in my bare feet, and at the beginning it was very bad. Except on the very edge of the abyss there was scarcely a handhold. Possibly in floods the waters may have swept the wall in a curve, smoothing down the inner part and leaving the outer to its natural roughness. There was one place where I had to hang on by a very narrow crack, while I scraped with the ax a hollow for my right foot. And then about twelve feet from the ground I struck the first of the iron pegs.

To this day I can not think what these pegs were for. They were old square-headed things which had seen the wear of centuries. They can not have been meant to assist a climber, for the dwellers of the cave had clearly never contemplated this means of egress. Perhaps they had been used for some kind of ceremonial curtain in a dim past. They were rusty and frail, and one of them came away in my hand, but for all that they marvelously assisted my ascent.

I had been climbing slowly, doggedly and carefully, my mind wholly occupied with the task; and, almost before I knew, I found my head close under the roof of the cave. It was necessary now to move towards the river and the task seemed impossible. I could see no footholds, save two frail pegs, and in the corner between the wall and the roof was a rough arch too wide for a body to jam itself in. Just below the level of the roof—say two feet—I saw the submerged spike of rock. The waters raged around it and could not have been more than an inch deep on the top. If I could only get my foot on that, I believed I could avoid being swept down and stand up and reach for the well above the cave.

But how to get to it? It was no good delaying, for my frail holds might give at any moment. In any case I would have the moral security of the rope, so I passed it through a fairly stanch pin close to the roof, which had an upward tilt that almost made a ring of it. One end of the rope was round my body, the other was loose in my hand, and I paid it out as I moved. Moral support is something. Very gingerly I crawled like a fly along the wall, my fingers now clutching at a tiny knob, now clawing at a crack which did little more than hold my nails. It was all hopeless insanity, and yet somehow I did it. The rope and the nearness of the roof gave me confidence and balance.

Then the holds ceased altogether a couple of yards from the water. I saw my spike of rock a trifle below me. There was nothing for it but to risk all on a jump. I drew the rope out of the hitch, twined the slack round my waist, and leaped for the spike.

CHAPTER XXX

THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF

IT WAS like throwing oneself on a line of spears. The solid wall of water hurled me back and down, but as I fell my arms closed on the spike. There I hung while my feet were towed outwards by the volume of the stream as if they had been dead leaves. I was half stunned by the shock of the drip on my head, but I kept my wits and presently got my face outside the falling sheet and breathed.

To get to my feet and stand on the spike while all that fury of water was plucking at me was the hardest physical effort I have ever made. It had to be done very circumspectly, for a slip would send me into the abyss. If I moved an arm or a leg an inch too near the terrible dropping wall I knew I should be plucked from my hold. I got my knees on the outer face of the spike, so that all my body was removed as far as possible from the impact of the water. Then I began to pull myself slowly up.

I could not do it. If I got my feet on the rock the effort would bring me too far into the water and that meant destruction. I saw this clearly in a second while my wrists were cracking with the effort. But if I had a wall behind me I could reach back with one hand and get what we call in Scotland a "stell." I knew there was a wall, but how far I could not judge. The perpetual hammering of the stream had confused my wits.

It was a horrible moment, but I had to risk it. I knew that if the wall was too far back I should fall, for I had to let my weight go till my hand fell on it. Delay would do no good, so with a prayer I flung my right hand back, while my left hand clutched the spike.

I found the wall—it was only a foot or two beyond my reach. With a heave I had my foot on the spike and, turning, had both hands on the opposite wall. There I stood, straddling like a Colossus over a waste of white waters, with the cave floor far below me in the gloom and my discarded ax lying close to a splash of Laputa's blood.

The spectacle made me giddy, and I had to move on or fall. The wall was not quite perpendicular, but, as far as I could see, a slope of about 60°. It was ribbed and terraced pretty fully, but I could see no ledge within reach that offered standing-room. Once more I tried the moral support of the rope and, as well as I could, dropped a noose on the spike, which might hold me if I fell.

Then I boldly embarked on a hard traverse, pulling myself along a little ledge till I was right in the angle of the fall. Here happily the water was shallower and less violent, and with my legs up to the knees in foam I managed to scramble into a kind of corner. Now at last I was on the side of the gully, and above the cave. I had achieved by amazing luck one of the most difficult of all mountaineering operations. I had got out of a cave to the wall above.

MY TROUBLES were by no means over, for I found the cliff most difficult to climb. The great rush of the stream confused my brain, the spray made the rock damp, and the slope steepened as I advanced. At one overhang my shoulder was almost in the water again. All this time I was climbing doggedly, with terror, somewhere in my soul, and hope lighting but a feeble lamp. I was very distrustful of my body, for I knew that at any moment my weakness might return. The fever of three days of peril and stress is not allayed by one night's rest.

By this time I was high enough to see that the river came out of the ground about fifty feet short of the lip of the gully and some ten feet beyond where I stood. Above the hole whence the waters came was a loose slope of slabs and screes. It looked an ugly place, but there I must go, for the rock-wall I was on was getting unclimbable.

I turned the corner a foot or two above the water, and stood on a slope of about 50° running from the parapet of stone to a line beyond which blue sky appeared. The first step I took, the place began to move. A boulder crashed into the fall and tore down into the abyss with a shattering thunder. I lay flat and clutched desperately at every scrub, but I had loosened an avalanche of earth, and not till my feet were sprayed by the water did I get a grip of firm rock and check my descent. All this frightened me horribly, with the kind of despairing, angry fear I had suffered at Bruderstoon when I dreamed that the treasure was lost. I could not bear the notion of death when I had won so far.

After that I advanced not by steps but by inches. I felt more poised and pinnacled in the void than when I had stood on the spike of rock, for I had a substantial hold neither for foot nor hand. It seemed weeks before I made any progress away from the lip of the water-hole. I dared not look down, but kept my eyes on the slope before me, searching for any patch of ground that promised stability. Once I found a scrog of juniper with firm roots, and this gave me a great lift. A little farther, however, I lit on a bank of screes which slipped with me to the right and I lost most of the ground the bush had gained me. My whole being, I remember, was filled with a devouring passion to be quit of this gully and all that was in it.

Then, not suddenly as in romances, but after hard striving and hope long deferred, I found myself on a firm outcrop of weathered stone. In three strides I was on the edge of the plateau. Then I began to run and at the same time to lose the power of running. I cast one look behind me and saw a deep cleft of darkness out of which I had climbed.

Down in the cave it had seemed light enough, but in the clear sunshine of the top the gorge looked a very pit of shade. For the first and last time in my life I had vertigo. Fear of falling back and a mad craze to do it made me actually sick. I managed to stumble a few steps forward on the mountain turf, and then flung myself on my face.

WHEN I raised my head I was amazed to find it still early morning. The dew was yet on the grass, and the sun was not far up the sky. I had thought that my entry into the cave, my time in it, and my escape had taken many hours, whereas at the most they had occupied two. It was little more than dawn—such a dawn as walks only on the hilltops. Before me was the shallow vale with its bracken and sweet grass, and the shining links of the stream, and the loch still gray in the shadow of the beleaguering hills. Here was a fresh, clean land, a land of homesteads and orchards and children. All of a sudden I realized that at last I had come out of savagery.

The burden of the past days slipped from my shoulders. I felt young again, and cheerful and brave. Behind me were the black night and the horrid secrets of darkness. Before me was my own country, for that loch and that bracken might have been on a Scotch moor. The fresh scent of the air and the whole morning mystery put song into my blood. I remembered that I was not yet twenty.

My first care was to kneel there among the bracken and give thanks to my Maker, Who in very truth had shown me "His goodness in the land of the living."

After a little I went back to the edge of the cliff. There, where the road came out of the bush, was the sprawled body of Henriques, with two dismounted riders looking hard at it. I gave a great shout, for in the men I recognized Aitken and the schoolmaster Wardlaw.

CHAPTER XXXI

I GO AGAIN TO INANDA'S KRAAL

I MUST now take up some of the ragged ends that I have left behind me. It is not my task, as I have said, to write the history of the great Rising. That has been done by abler men, who were at the center of the business and had some knowledge of strategy and tactics; whereas I was only a raw lad who was privileged by fate to see the start. If I could, I would fain make an epic of it, and show how the Plains found at all points the Plateau guarded, how wits overcame numbers, and at every pass which the natives tried the great guns spoke and the tide rolled back.

Yet I fear it would be an epic without a hero. There was no leader left when Laputa had gone. There were months of guerrilla fighting, and then months of reprisals, when chief after chief was hunted down and brought to trial. Then the amnesty came and a clean sheet, and white Africa drew breath again with certain grave reflections left in her head.

On the whole I am not sorry that the history is no business of mine. Romance died with "the Heir of John," and the crusade became a sorry mutiny. I can fancy how differently Laputa would have managed it all, had he lived; how swift and sudden his plans would have been; how under him the fighting would not have been in the mountain glens but far into the high-veld among the dorps and townships. With the Inkulu alive we warred against odds; with the Inkulu dead the balance sank heavily in our favor. I leave to others the marches and strategy of the thing and hasten to clear up the obscure parts in my own fortunes.

Arcoll received my message from Umvelos' by Colin, or rather Wardlaw received it and sent it on to the post on the Berg where the leader had gone. Close on its heels came the message from Henriques by a Shangaan in his pay. It must have been sent off before the Portuguese got to the Rooirand, from which it would appear that he had his own men in the bush near the store and that I was lucky to get off as I did.

Arcoll might have disregarded Henriques' news as a trap if it had come alone, but my corroboration impressed and perplexed him. He began to credit the Portuguese with treachery, but he had no inclination to act on his message, since it conflicted with his plans. He knew that Laputa must come into the Berg sooner or later, and he had resolved that his strategy must be to await him there.

But there was the question of my life. He had every reason to believe that I was in the greatest danger, and he felt a certain responsibility for my fate. With the few men at his disposal he could not hope to hold up the great Kaffir army, but there was a chance that he might by a bold stand effect my rescue. Henriques had told him of the Vow, and had told him that Laputa would ride in the center of the force. A body of men well posted at Dupree's Drift might split the army at the crossing, and under cover of the fire I might swim the river and join my friends. Still relying on the Vow, it might be possible for well-mounted men to evade capture.

Accordingly he called for volunteers, and sent off one of his Kaffirs to warn me of his design. He led his men in person, and of his doings the reader already knows the tale. But though the crossing was flung into confusion, and the rear of the army were compelled to follow the northerly bank of the Letaba, there was no sign of me anywhere. Arcoll searched the river-banks and crossed the Drift to where the old Keeper was lying dead. He then concluded that I had been murdered early on the march, and his Kaffir, who might have given him news of me, was carried up the stream in the tide of the disorderly army. Therefore he and his men rode back with all haste to the Berg by way of Main Drift, and reached Bruderstoon before Laputa had crossed the highway.

MY INFORMATION about Inanda's Kraal decided Arcoll's next move. Like me, he remembered Beyer's performance and resolved to repeat it. He had no hope of catching Laputa, but he thought that he might hold up the bulk of his force if he got guns on the ridge above the *kraal*. A message had already been sent for guns, and the first to arrive got to Bruderstoon about the hour when I was being taken by Machudi's men in the *kloof*. The ceremony of the Purification prevented Laputa from keeping a good lookout, and the result was that a way was made for the guns on the northwestern corner of the rampart of rock. It was the way that Beyers had taken, and indeed the enterprise was directed by one of Beyer's old commandants.

All that day the work continued, while Laputa and I were traveling to Machudi's. Then came the evening when I staggered into camp and told my news. Arcoll, who alone knew how vital Laputa was to the success of the insurrection, immediately decided to suspend all other operations and devote himself to shepherding the leader away from his army. How the scheme succeeded and what befell Laputa the reader has already been told.

Aitken and Wardlaw, when I descended from the cliffs, took me straight to Blaauwildebeestefontein. I was like a man who is recovering from bad fever, cured, but weak and foolish, and it was a slow journey that I made to Umvelos', riding on Aitken's pony. At Umvelos' we found a picket who had captured the *schimmel* by the roadside. The wise beast, when I turned him loose at the entrance to the cave, had trotted quietly back the way he had come.

At Umvelos' Aitken left me, and next day, with Wardlaw as companion, I rode up the glen of the Klein Labonga, and came in the afternoon to my old home. The store was empty, for Japp some days before had gone off post-haste to Pietersdorp; but there was Zeeta clearing up the place as if war had never been heard of. I slept the night there, and in the morning found myself so much recovered that I was eager to get away. I wanted to see Arcoll about many things, but mainly about the treasure in the cave.

It was an easy journey to Bruderstoon through the meadows of the Plateau. The farmers' commandoes had been recalled, but the ashes of their camp-fires were still gray among the bracken. I fell in with a police patrol and was taken by them to a spot on the Upper Letaba, some miles west of the camp, where we found Arcoll at a late breakfast. I had resolved to take him fully into my confidence, so I told him the full tale of my night's adventure. He was very severe with me, I remember, for my daft-like ride, but his severity relaxed before I had done with my story.

The telling brought back the scene to me, and I shivered at the picture of the cave with the morning breaking through the veil of water and Laputa in his death-throes. Arcoll did not speak for some time.

"So he is dead," he said at last, half whispering to himself. "Well, he was a king, and died like a king! Our job now is simple, for there are none of his breed left in Africa!"

Then I told him of the treasure.

"It belongs to you, Davie," he said, "and we must see that you get it. This is going to be a long war, but if we survive to the end you will be a rich man."

"But in the meantime?" I asked. "Supposing other Kaffirs hear of it, and come back and make a bridge over the gorge? They may be doing it now."

"I'll put a guard on it," he said, jumping up briskly. "It's maybe not a soldier's job, but you've saved this country, Davie, and I'm going to make sure that you have your reward!"

AFTER that I went with Arcoll to Inanda's Kraal. I am not going to tell the story of that performance, for it occupies no less than two chapters in Mr. Upton's book. He makes one or two blunders, for he spells my name with an "o," and he says we walked out of the camp on our perilous mission "with faces white and set as a Crusader's." This is certainly not true, for in the first place nobody saw us go who could judge how we looked, and in the second place we were both smoking and feeling quite cheerful. At home they made a great fuss about it and started a newspaper cry about the Victoria Cross, but the danger was not so terrible after all, and in any case it was nothing to what I had been through in the past week.

I take credit to myself for suggesting the idea. By this time we had the army in the *kraal* at our mercy. Laputa not having returned, they had no plans. It had been the original intention to start for the Olifants on the following day, so there was a scanty supply of food. Besides, there were the makings of a pretty quarrel between Umbooni and some of the north-country chiefs, and I verily believe that if we had held them tight there for a week they would have destroyed each other in faction fights.

In a little they would have grown desperate and tried to rush the approaches on the north and south. Then we must either have used guns on them, which would have meant a great slaughter, or let them go to do mischief elsewhere. Arcoll was a merciful man who had no love for butchery; besides, he was a statesman with an eye to the future of the country after the war. But it was his duty to isolate Laputa's army, and at all costs it must be prevented from joining any of the concentrations of the south.

Then I proposed to him to do as Rhodes did in the Matoppos, and go and talk to them. By this time, I argued, the influence of Laputa must have sunk and the fervor of the Purification be half forgotten. The army had little food and no leader. The rank and file had never been fanatical, and the chiefs and *indunas* must now be inclined to sober reflections. But, once blood was shed, the lust of battle would possess them. Our only chance was to strike when their minds were perplexed and undecided.

CHAPTER XXXII

I DELIVER LAPUTA'S WORD

ARCOLL did all the arranging. He had a message sent to the chiefs, inviting them to an *indaba*, and presently word was brought back that an *indaba* was called for the next day at noon. That same night we heard that Umbooni and about twenty of his men had managed to evade our ring of scouts and get clean away to the south. This was all to our advantage, as it removed from the coming *indaba* the most irreconcilable of the chiefs.

That *indaba* was a queer business. Arcoll and I left our escort at the foot of a ravine and entered the *kraal* by the same road as I had left it. It was a very bright, hot Winter's day and, try as I might, I could not bring myself to think of any danger. I believe that in this way most temerarious deeds are done—the doer has become insensible to danger and his imagination is clouded with some engrossing purpose. The first sentries received us gloomily enough, and closed behind us as they had done when Machudi's men haled me thither. Then the job became eerie, for we had to walk across a green flat with thousands of eyes watching us. By-and-by we came to the merula tree opposite the *kyas*, and there we found a ring of chiefs, sitting with cocked rifles on their knees.

We were armed with pistols, and the first thing Arcoll did was to hand them to one of the chiefs.

"We come in peace," he said. "We give you our lives."

THEN the *indaba* began, Arcoll leading off. It was a fine speech he made, the finest I have ever listened to. He asked them what their grievances were; he told them how mighty was the power of the white man; he promised that what was unjust should be remedied, if only they would speak honestly and peacefully;

he harped on their old legends and songs, claiming for the King of Britain the right of their old monarchs. It was a fine speech, and yet I saw that it did not convince them. They listened moodily, if courteously, and at the end there was a blank silence.

Arcoll turned to me. "For God's sake, Davie," he said, "talk to them about Laputa! It's our only chance!"

I had never tried speaking before, and, though I talked their tongue, I had not Arcoll's gift of it. But I felt that a great cause was at stake and I spoke up as best I could.

I began by saying that Inkulu had been my friend, and that at Umvelos' before the Rising he had tried to save my life. At the mention of the name I saw eyes brighten. At last the audience was hanging on my words.

I told them of Henriques and his treachery. I told them frankly and fairly of the doings at Dupree's Drift. I made no secret of the part I played. "I was fighting for my life," I said. "Any man of you, who is a man, would have done the like!"

Then I told them of my last ride, and the sight I saw at the foot of the Rooirand. I drew a picture of Henriques lying dead with a broken neck, and the Inkulu, wounded to death, creeping into the cave.

In moments of extremity I suppose every man becomes an orator. In that hour and place I discovered gifts I had never dreamed of. Arcoll told me afterwards that I had spoken like a man inspired and by a fortunate chance had hit upon the only way to move my hearers. I told of that last scene in the cave, when Laputa had broken down the bridge and had spoken his dying words—that he was the last king in Africa and that without him the Rising was at an end. Then I told of his leap into the river, and a great sigh went up from the ranks about me.

"You see me here," I said, "by the grace of God. I found a way up the fall and the cliffs which no man has ever traveled before or will travel again. Your king is dead. He was a great king, as I who stand here bear witness, and you will never more see his like. His last words were that the Rising was over. Respect that word, my brothers! We come to you not in war, but in peace, to offer a free pardon and the redress of your wrongs. If you fight, you fight with the certainty of failure and against the wish of the Heir of John. I have come here at the risk of my life to tell you his commands. His spirit approves my mission. Think well before you defy the mandate of the Snake and risk the vengeance of the Terrible Ones!"

After that I knew that we had won. The chiefs talked among themselves in low whispers, casting strange looks at me. Then the greatest of them advanced and laid his rifle at my feet.

"We believe the word of a brave man," he said. "We accept the mandate of the Snake!"

ARCOLL now took command. He arranged for the disarmament bit by bit, companies of men being marched off from Inanda's Kraal to stations on the plateau, where their arms were collected by our troops, and food provided for them. For the full history I refer the reader to Mr. Upton's work. It took many days and taxed all our resources, but by the end of a week we had the whole of Laputa's army in separate stations, under guard, disarmed and awaiting repatriation.

Then Arcoll went south to the war which was to rage around the Swaziland and Zululand borders for many months, while to Aitken and myself was entrusted the task of repatriation. We had inadequate troops at our command, and but for our prestige and the weight of Laputa's dead hand there might any moment have been a tragedy. The task took months, for many of the legions came from the far north, and the job of feeding troops on a long journey was difficult enough in the Winter season when the energies of the country were occupied with the fighting in the south.

Yet it was an experience for which I shall ever be grateful, for it turned me from a rash boy into a serious man. I knew then the meaning of the white man's duty. He has to take all risks, recking nothing of his life or his fortunes, well content to find his reward in the fulfilment of his task. That is the difference between white and black—the gift of responsibility, the power of being in a little way a king; and so long as we know this and practise it, we will rule not in Africa alone but wherever there are dark men who live only for the day and their own bellies.

Moreover the work made me pitiful and kindly. I learned much of the untold grievances of the natives, and saw something of their strange, twisted reasoning. Before we had got Laputa's army back to their *kraals*, with food enough to tide them over the Spring sowing, Aitken and I had got sounder policy in our head than you will find in the towns, where men sit in offices, and see the world through a mist of papers.

By this time peace was at hand and I went back to Inanda's Kraal to look for Colin's grave. It was not a difficult quest, for on the sward in front of the merula tree they had buried him. I found a mason in the Iron Kranz village, and from the excellent red stone of the neighborhood was hewed a square slab with an inscription. It ran thus:

"*Here lies buried the dog Colin, who was killed in defending D. Crawfurd, his master. To him it was mainly due that the Kaffir Rising failed.*"

I leave those who read my tale to see the justice of the words.

CHAPTER XXXIII

MY UNCLE'S GIFT IS MANY TIMES MULTIPLIED

WE GOT at the treasure by blowing open the turnstile. It was easy enough to trace the spot in the rock where it stood, but the most patient search did not reveal its secret. Accordingly we had recourse to dynamite, and soon laid bare the stone steps and ascended to the gallery. The chasm was bridged with planks, and Arcoll and I crossed alone. The cave was as I had left it. The bloodstains on the floor had grown dark with time, but the ashes of the sacramental fire were still there to remind me of the drama I had borne a part in.

When I looked at the way I had escaped my brain grew dizzy at the thought of it. I do not think that all the gold on earth would have driven me a second time to that awful escalade. As for Arcoll he could not see its possibility at all. "Only a madman could have done it!" he said, blinking his eyes at the green linn. "Indeed, Davie, I think for about four days you were as mad as they make. It was a fortunate thing, for your madness saved the country!"

With some labor we got the treasure down to the path, and took it under a strong guard to Pietersdorp. The Government was busy with the settling up after the war, and it took many weeks to have our business disposed of. At first things looked bad for me. The Attorney-General set up a claim to the whole as spoils of war, since he argued it was the war-chest of the enemy we had conquered. I do not know how the matter would have gone on legal grounds, though I was advised by my lawyers that this claim was a bad one.

But the part I had played in the whole business, more especially in the visit to Inanda's Kraal, had made me a kind of popular hero, and the Government thought better of their first attitude. Besides, Arcoll had great influence, and the whole story of my doings, which was told privately by him to some of the members of the Government, disposed them to be generous. Accordingly they agreed to treat the contents of the cave as ordinary treasure-trove, of which by the law one-half went to the discoverer and one-half to the Crown.

This was well enough as far as the gold was concerned, but another difficulty arose about the diamonds. For a large part of these had obviously been stolen by laborers from the mines, and the mining people laid claim to them as stolen goods. I was advised not to dispute this claim, and consequently we had a great sorting-out of the stones, in the presence of the experts of the different mines. In the end it turned out that identification was not an easy matter, for the experts quarreled furiously among themselves. A compromise was at last come to, and a division made, and then the diamond companies behaved very handsomely, voting me a substantial sum in recognition of my services in recovering their property.

What with this, and with my half-share of the gold and my share of the unclaimed stones, I found that I had a very considerable fortune. The whole of my stones I sold to De Beers, for if I had placed them on the open market I should have upset the delicate equipose of diamond values. When I came finally to cast up my account I found that I had secured a fortune of a trifle over a quarter of a million pounds.

So much wealth did not dazzle so much as it solemnized me. I had no impulse to spend any part of it in a riot of folly. It had come to me like fairy gold out of the void;

it had been bought with man's blood, almost with my own. I wanted to get away to a quiet place and think, for of late my life had been too crowded with drama, and there comes a satiety of action as well as of idleness. Above all things I wanted to get home. They gave me a great send-off, and sang songs, and good fellows shook my hand till it ached. The papers were full of me, and the Prime Minister made a speech in my honor at a farewell banquet. But I could not relish this glory as I ought, for I was like a boy thrown violently out of his bearings.

Not till I was nearing Cape Town in the train did I recover my equanimity. The burden of the past seemed to slip from me suddenly as on the morning when I had climbed the linn. I saw my life all lying before me; and already I had won success. I thought of my return to my own country, my first sight of the gray shores of Fife, my visit to Kirkcaple, my meeting with my mother. I was a rich man now who could choose his career, and my mother need never again want for comfort. My money seemed pleasant to me, for, if men won it by brains or industry, I had won it by sterner methods, for I had staked against it my life. I sat alone in the railway carriage, and cried with pure thankfulness. These were comforting tears, for they brought me back to my old commonplace self.

MY LAST memory of Africa is my meeting with Tam Dyke. I caught sight of him in the streets of Cape Town, and, running after him, clapped him on the shoulder. He stared at me as if he had seen a ghost.

"Is it yourself, Davie?" he cried. "I never looked to see you again in this world! I do nothing but read about you in the papers. What for did ye not send for me? Here have I been knocking about inside a ship and you have been getting famous! They tell me you're a millionaire, too."

I had Tam to dinner at my hotel, and later, sitting smoking on the terrace and watching the flying-ants among the aloes, I told him the better part of the story I have here written down.

"Man, Davie," he said at the end, "ye've had a tremendous time! Here are you not eighteen months away from home and you're going back with a fortune! What will you do with it?"

I told him that I proposed, to begin with, to finish my education at Edinburgh College. At this he roared with laughter.

"That's a dull ending, anyway. It's me that should have the money, for I'm full of imagination. You were aye a prosaic body, Davie."

"Maybe I am," I said. "But I am very sure of one thing: If I hadn't been a prosaic body, I wouldn't be sitting here to-night."

TWO years later Aitken found the diamond pipe which he had always suspected lay in the mountains. Some of the stones in the cave, being unlike any ordinary African diamonds, confirmed his suspicions and sent him on the track. A Kaffir tribe to the northeast of the Rooirand had known of it, but they had never worked it, but only collected the overspill. The closing down of one of the chief existing mines had created a shortage of diamonds in the world's markets, and once again the position was the same as when Kimberley began. Accordingly he made a great fortune, and to-day the Aitken proprietary mine is one of the most famous in the country.

But Aitken did more than mine diamonds, for he had not forgotten the lesson we had learned together in the work of repatriation. He laid down a big fund for the education and amelioration of the native races, and the first fruit of it was the establishment in Blaauwildebeestefontein itself of a great native training college. It was no factory for making missionaries and black teachers, but an institution for giving the Kaffirs the kind of training that fits them to be good citizens of the State. There you will find every kind of technical workshop, and the finest experimental farms, where the blacks are taught modern agriculture. They have proved themselves apt pupils, and to-day you will see in the glens of the Berg and in the Plains Kaffir tillage as scientific as any in Africa. They have created a huge export trade in tobacco and fruit; the cotton promises well; and there is talk of a new fiber which will do wonders. Also along the river bottoms the india-rubber business is prospering.

There are playing-fields and baths and reading-rooms and libraries just as in a school at home. In front of the great hall of the college a statue stands, the figure of a black man shading his eyes with his hands and looking far over the plains to the Rooirand. On the pedestal it is lettered "Prester John," but the face is the face of Laputa. So the last of the kings of Africa does not lack his monument.

Of this institution Mr. Wardlaw is the head. He writes to me weekly, for I am one of the governors, as well as an old friend, and from a recent letter I take this passage:

> I often cast my mind back to the afternoon when you and I sat on the step of the schoolhouse and talked of the Kaffirs and our future. I had about a dozen pupils then, and now I have nearly three thousand, and in place of a tin-roofed shanty and a yard I have a whole countryside. You laughed at me for my keenness, Davie, but I've seen it justified. I was never a man of war like you, and so I had to bide at home while you and your like were straightening out the troubles. But when it was all over my job began, for I could do what you couldn't do—I was the physician to heal wounds.
>
> You mind how nervous I was when I heard the drums beat. I hear them every evening now, for we have made a rule that all the Kaffir farms on the Berg sound a kind of curfew. It reminds me of old times, and tells me that though it is peace now-a-days we mean to keep all the manhood in them that they used to exercise in war.
>
> It would do your eyes good to see the garden we have made out of the Klein Labonga glen. The place is one big orchard with every kind of tropical fruit in it, and the irrigation dam is as full of rainbow trout as it will hold. Out at Umvelos' there is a tobacco-factory and all round Sikitola's we have square miles of mealie and cotton fields. The loch on the Rooirand is stocked with Lochleven trout, and we have made a bridlepath up to it in a gully east of the one you climbed.
>
> You ask about Machudi's. The last time I was there the place was white with sheep, for we have got the edge of the plateau grazed down and sheep can get the short bite there. We have cleaned up all the *kraals*, and the chiefs are members of our county council and are as fond of hearing their own voices as an Aberdeen bailie.
>
> It's a queer transformation we have wrought and, when I sit and smoke my pipe in the evening and look over the plains and then at the big black statue you and Aitken set up, I thank the Providence that has guided me so far. I hope and trust that in the Bible words "the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for us." At any rate, it will not be my fault if they don't "blossom as the rose." Come out and visit us soon, man, and see the work you had a hand in starting.

I am thinking seriously of taking Wardlaw's advice.

THE END

THE CHAIR THAT SMILED

BY EDITH RICKERT

"THIS room," said the housekeeper, "is never shown."

The tourist whom she had been conducting through the long upper gallery of Selward House stood obstinately in front of the low oaken door to which she referred.

"It is not a private apartment?" he insinuated. "I should particularly like to see it." He held out a sovereign as inducement.

Mrs. Green turned her back upon the golden temptation and said haughtily: "It is not in my power, sir. The room has not been opened since I can remember."

She turned to move on, but the visitor remained standing with his feet wide apart and his hands in his pockets. His boots, his clothes and his chin proclaimed him a successful American.

"Indeed?" he said. "That is odd. But I suppose there is always a way to do these things. Is Sir Charles at home?"

She was obliged to come back to him: "No, sir, he has gone to the meet."

"And you are sure you have no key that would unlock the door?"

"I know my own keys, sir."

He shifted his ground: "Well, is there no other member of the family——?" He absently played with several gold coins in one palm.

"There's only Miss Elizabeth, sir; she's in the garden. But I couldn't trouble her——"

The American's face suddenly twinkled: "See here, my good woman, if you'll kindly get the young lady to step up here, I'll bet you fifty dollars—that's ten pounds—she'll find a way to let me into that room! And if she doesn't, you shall have the fifty anyway. So you stand to win in either case."

If Mrs. Green thought she was dealing with a madman, the two notes that he held out to her vouched for a degree of sanity. Besides, she reflected, she ran no risk except of Miss Elizabeth's anger. The young lady knew no more than herself where the key of the room was kept—if indeed it had not been lost before any of them was born.

She pressed a button in the wall, and to the footman who appeared gave the brief direction that he should look for Miss Elizabeth in the garden and ask her whether she would be so kind as to come to the house a moment.

She then conducted the persistent intruder back to the entrance-hall, and with him awaited her lady's pleasure.

He was especially interested in a full-length portrait that hung over the chimney-piece.

"That was the first Sir Charles," she told him, "who founded the fortune of the family and built the house in the days of Queen Elizabeth."

"Is it allowable to ask how he obtained the money?" asked the American, with a curious, dry smile.

"In the wars against Spain," she answered curtly.

"Indeed? And the present Sir Charles—any resemblance?"

"Sir Charles is clean-shaven." Only the promise of the two five-pound notes kept her civil.

He moved to the next portrait: "And the red-haired young lady dipped in pearls is the founder's daughter?"

"His wife," began the housekeeper, but was interrupted by a fresh voice, asking haughtily: "Did you wish to see me?" He turned to face a pretty girl in white linen, not so unlike the portrait he had been studying.

"Miss Selward?" He bowed and handed her a card upon which she read the name Ramon Stanley, and a New York address.

"I must plead a desire to see your secret chamber—not due, as you might suppose, to idle curiosity." He paused and began again, with his curious smile, "What should you say if I were to tell you exactly what is in that room?"

SHE looked at him with some slight interest: "Cobwebs, I should say. How do you know? I never was in it myself and I don't know what's there—do you, Green?"

"No, madam," said the housekeeper, "but I have heard my grandfather tell as how it was haunted. He used to say as your grandmother, Lady Maria, was the last as ever entered the room. What she saw nobody ever knew, but she came out screaming and was took with convulsions and died within the day. It hasn't been unlocked in my time—not to my knowledge."

"Do you know whether there is a key?" asked Miss Elizabeth, with evident curiosity; and as Mrs. Green shook her head, she turned to the stranger: "At least, I should be interested to hear you tell what you think there is in the room."

"I don't *think*," said he. "I *know*, almost as well as if I'd seen 'em. I may be wrong in a few details. There's a big round table covered with gilt and embossed leather, supported by three lions of painted leather."

"Leather!" exclaimed the girl.

"And lions!" gasped the housekeeper.

"Over this should be hanging seven lamps—also of leather—representing the Seven Deadly Sins; if they were lighted, the flame would come out of the mouth of each——"

The girl was wide-eyed now and Mrs. Green dumb with amazement.

"On the table," he pursued calmly, "is a big wine flagon built like a Spanish galleon of the Armada—also of leather. And a dozen—there should be a dozen—tankards shaped and painted like grinning faces, with pointed hats for their covers."

"Still of leather?" asked Miss Selward.

"All of leather," said he. "And round the table are leather chairs, a dozen of them, shaped and painted to look like men, so that when you sit down you seem to sink into the arms of a human being—so I understand——"

"Of all the madness!" exclaimed Miss Selward.

"For that reason," said Mr. Stanley, "you can perhaps pardon my eagerness to learn whether I am right. Not that I have much doubt myself. But I thought it worth a trip across the ocean to make sure."

"Tell me how you knew," she commanded.

He considered a moment: "There would be no point in my doing that until the case is proven. Afterward, I should be bound to explain." He added meditatively: "And each of the chairs has a ring on the forefinger of the left hand; and all the faces have eyes that follow you round the room, and one, it is said, has a smile that comes and goes——" He stopped and added with a change of tone, "I'm not making up all this stuff, you know."

Miss Selward hesitated: "Have you any theory as to how my grandmother came by her death?"

He answered without hesitation: "Yes, a theory—which the room itself would prove or disprove."

Miss Selward made up her mind: "Green, I'm going to have a look for that key in the study. I know where father keeps all his keys—it can't do any harm. Do you suppose it's labeled 'Haunted Chamber'?"

She moved away, followed by the housekeeper's protest—words quickly muffled, however, by the arrival of the promised notes in her palm.

Stanley had had time to examine all the portraits in the hall before Miss Selward came back breathless: "They were all labeled but these," she said. "Father's most methodical. I don't believe he knows what these are himself. They are clumsy and old enough—it's a chance."

She ran up the wide oak stairway, quickly followed by Stanley; and by the time that Mrs. Green had labored up to them in the gallery they had already tried and rejected half the bunch.

Suddenly Stanley, who had been wrestling with the stiff lock, looked at the girl: "It turned!"

"Open—open!" she cried eagerly.

Still he hesitated: "Do you know, I don't quite like to; I begin to doubt my own statements now. I'm afraid I shall be made out a liar after all."

However, he was perhaps unconsciously pushing harder than he realized, for a mere touch of her hand above his bent shoulder sent the door inward with a crash.

The room was darkened by a green curtain hung across a large window opposite the door, but this curtain was full of rifts and holes that admitted strong rays and patches of light.

Miss Selward, who had leaned eagerly forward, fell back with a suppressed scream and clutched the housekeeper's arm. Stanley himself, looking in, gripped the doorpost hard, so strong was the illusion upon him that a company of men sat drinking at the round table, while over their heads shadowy monstrous dragons or crocodiles threatened descent upon them.

The next moment, triumph was uppermost. "By George!" said he. "What did I tell you?"

"Mercy on us!" ejaculated the plump housekeeper, feeling that the emergency was altogether beyond her. "Shall I ring for help, madam?"

"What for?" asked Stanley. "No, we'll just wait to get a little live air into the place, so that we don't all die of suffocation; and then we'll look round and see how nearly I was right."

The air that came out into the draughty corridor was peculiarly dead, full of dry rot, attesting that the room and its windows had been shut for generations.

STANLEY was the first to enter. With a careful avoidance of the ghastly seated figures, he crossed to the large window and cautiously tugged to draw one of the green curtains aside. It first resisted, then tore under his hand with a great cloud of dust, then gave way above so that he had barely time to dodge its folds. Half blinded and choked, he groped his way back to the gallery, where the two women stood coughing, the younger with her handkerchief over her mouth.

"One good thing," said Stanley, when he could speak, "the germs are probably as dead as the air. Shall we explore further?"

"I'm not sure that we oughtn't to wait until my father returns," said Miss Selward. But curiosity overcame her: "There can be no harm in looking."

"I want to prove that my list was right," said Stanley, whose eyes had been busy. "Look now, isn't it so? Here is the leather table supported by lions; on it the galleon and the twelve leering mugs; above it the seven Deadly Sins to give light; and round it the twelve chairs like Elizabethan dandies with frills and slashes. They have even the rings that I spoke of on their forefingers. By George, notice their eyes—they look alive! Can you make out which is the one that smiles?"

He went from one chair to another trying to discover minute differences in their seeming sameness. Suddenly Miss Selward said faintly: "Open—the window—please!"

While he struggled with the rusty catch he heard a slight thud and turned in time to see her sway and fall into the chair at the head of the table.

For a moment he was paralyzed, not at the sight of her fair head drooping sideways over the leather arm, but at the expression of the painted chair-back that looked and leered above her shoulder. There could be no doubt which chair it was that smiled!

"For God's sake," he cried to the housekeeper, as he rushed toward the two women, "get her out of that!"

But Mrs. Green stood like a wooden image, and Miss Selward straightened herself with an effort to speak naturally: "I'm all right; I was only a little faint. Do you know, this ring looks as if it were set with real rubies? And it's loose—I believe it would come off——"

She got no further, for Stanley was bending over her, white as chalk. Before she could exclaim, he had caught her by the arms and dragged her from her place so violently that they both nearly fell over. To save them, he clutched at the table and set all the tankards rattling. The nearest one rolled to the floor. From one of the dragons above something was jarred loose and fell with a snap on the table, but nobody looked at it. Both women stared at the stranger, who was wiping his forehead, with his eyes shut. "By George!" said he. "That was a near go!"

Miss Selward was the first to recover her composure. "Now," she said, "will you kindly explain?"

Stanley opened his eyes with a slight start: "It's all right—only don't sit down again. That was the Queen's chair. You mustn't sit in the Queen's chair."

"What queen?" said she.

"Elizabeth. That's the chair that smiled. No mistake about it. I saw it plain as day."

Miss Selward looked back at it. "It isn't smiling now," she said gravely. "You must have imagined. In fact, I'm not sure now which of these two I sat in. But I can soon tell; it was the one on which the ring was loose."

She turned to see, but Stanley caught her arm without ceremony: "Don't! Wait till I tell you something."

Her attention was diverted by a clatter of hoofs in the court below the open window. "That will be my father," she said, and then: "Green, will you go down and ask Sir Charles to step up here at once? And not a word to the servants, please."

The wooden image came to life with a gasp of relief and waited for no second telling.

"Now," said Miss Selward.

"Perhaps you did not notice," said Stanley, "that my Christian name is Ramon?"

She nodded. "Spanish," she said. "I wondered a little."

"I am of Spanish descent," said he, and in that moment she saw his race in the quality of his bearing. "But my people have been settled in America for generations. You have no idea how this furniture came to be here? No? Well, I have the story of it in a small tin box full of parchments—three hundred years old and more. The family didn't know what was in them—we've always been country gentlemen, not scholars; but when I went home from Johns Hopkins I stumbled upon the box in my father's safe and tried to figure out the contents. They were written partly in Spanish and partly in Latin, but I couldn't make much of 'em, so I got the bright idea of bringing 'em over to an expert at the British Museum. Now I have neat copies in duplicate, one of which I shall be happy to lend your father some day—if he is interested. Among the papers was a plan of this house as built by the first Sir Charles, and an inventory of the contents of this room. Hence my visit to-day."

"But how in the world——?"

"It's easy when you know. Your ancestor happened to be an ardent admirer of Queen Elizabeth; mine, the first Raymond Stanley—he was an Irishman in the service of King Philip of Spain—happened to be one of the countless victims of Mary Stuart."

"It sounds like a fairy-tale!" she breathed with parted lips.

"IT'S plain history," said he, "the kind of fact that's stranger than fiction. Just listen to this. When poor old Philip found his Armada show was no good, he was pretty near broken-hearted; and that was the time Raymond Stanley went to him with a neat scheme for revenge on his old enemy Elizabeth—a little gift of furniture for her palace of Hampton Court, or Staines, or where you like. He had happened to come upon a leather-worker—of Cordova, I think it was—and between them they devised this pretty suite for the Queen and her maids of honor. There's a little delicate irony in the design, do you see?—a hint at the taste of the Virgin Queen and her ladies for the knees of courtiers, in the light of the Seven Deadly Sins—that's pretty near a brilliant idea, isn't it? Not to speak of serving the wine in a Spanish galleon.

"I don't know whether the plan was to drug the drink—plenty of dare-devils about, seminary priests and others, who would have undertaken it for a handful of silver. I could tell you the names of some of them—English and Irish soldiers of fortune, Harry Young and Hugh Cahill, Moody, Walpole, Edmund Yorke—a dozen or more, generally of Sir William Stanley's regiment. Sir William was Raymond's uncle—but never mind all that; you shall read it later. This splendid gift was shipped for England under Captain Middleton, I believe; and Raymond Stanley and some of the others went with it. Off Ushant they encountered an English man-of-war, commanded by one Captain Charles Selward——"

"Ah!" said the girl. "Now I begin to——"

"They fought—naturally. Selward was the better seaman—the *Maria Reina* was pillaged and sunk—most of the crew drowned. Middleton and Raymond Stanley were picked up by French fishermen. Afterward Stanley came to England in disguise and by his own account haunted Selward House awhile, trying to get possession of his stuff or to take revenge on the English captain, whom he terms 'that insufferable pirate and enemy of God.' He failed. In fact, in our old papers—written for his son with the express command that that young man should follow up the feud as he saw his chance—he says that Selward, with the aid of the devil, saw through the plan and betrayed it to the Queen, who thereupon was so 'mewed up in her chamber' that no stranger could come into her presence. When he found that the Queen had not only knighted Sir Charles but had bestowed the furniture upon him for his pains, he lost heart, and went back to Spain. His son may have been a lazy rascal or a pious chap—anyway, nothing happened except that the papers and the name Raymond in its Spanish form have been handed down until now."

"But why did he want the Queen to have the furniture? And why were you so alarmed when I sat in that chair?" asked the practical Miss Selward.

"That's the cream of the plot," said Stanley, but was interrupted by the sound of heavy footsteps in the corridor. He turned to confront a short, stout man in mud-splashed hunting pink, whom he rightly assumed to be Sir Charles.

"Hoity-toity!" said this individual, after a hasty glance about the room. "What's all the row?"

Stanley's answer was to seize his gray felt hat and drop it on the floor. Then, seemingly oblivious of father and daughter, he knelt and fumbled for some seconds, rising rather flushed but calm. "I have just caught a mouse," he observed amiably, and showed a beady-eyed, gray snout wriggling between his thumb and forefinger. "It was a lucky chance I happened to see it. If you don't object, we will try an experiment before I explain myself."

He went up to the chair from which Miss Selward, when she had fallen into it, had brushed away some of the dust.

"If you will kindly stand by the table, you will be able to tell me whether my impression of a smile was a delusion or not."

He sat down deliberately and leaned back.

Miss Selward half put out her hand: "But don't—isn't it—dangerous?" she gasped.

The huntsman was speechless, seemingly on the verge of apoplexy at these strange doings in his house.

"I know the risk," said Stanley calmly. "Watch me. You observed that the ring was loose and were on the point of playing with it when I grabbed you. A loose ring is a great temptation for idle fingers—especially a beautiful ring set with rubies. Watch my hand." He leaned away from the chair-back as the girl had done, and, holding the squeaking mouse firmly between his thumb and first two fingers, set it upon the ring, using it as a sort of pad, and proceeded to twirl this round and round.

Miss Selward clung to her father's arm, rather faint.

In two or three seconds Stanley held out his palm toward them, with the mouse upon it, limp and dead!

Miss Selward was fast losing her self-control. "Father, father!" she sobbed hysterically. "He saved my life! *I* was going to play with the ring!"

"—— ——!" said Sir Charles, and nothing more.

* * *

"IT'S this way," said Stanley. "Each ruby is set in a circle of tiny stilettos—tipped with poison. I wasn't at all sure it would have kept its strength so long, but I thought best to be on the safe side. Old Raymond said it would kill a cat in ten minutes and a human being in several hours. All the other rings are of painted leather; this is of real gold and rubies, as you see. This fact was to be pointed out to the Queen, and the hope was that, with her love of priceless toys, she would sit down and grab it before she thought of a possible trap."

"Let us get away from this horrible room!" sobbed the girl.

"—— ——!" said the huntsman. "I think it's time!"

"But, say," asked Stanley, rising from his chair, "did either of you notice the smile?"

It seemed they had, not unnaturally, been absorbed in watching the mouse.

"Well, I guess we aren't in a state to experiment any more to-day. But I like to fancy that old Raymond planned the grin for the spectators after her Majesty had toyed with the ring long enough. We can look into that another day; there may be a spring that releases a smile upon the leather."

He perceived that the old gentleman, with his daughter on his arm, had halted majestically by the door and was adjusting a monocle, surveying the stranger as if he had that very moment first discerned his presence.

"And what am I to do for you, young sir?" he demanded.

In an instant there was a curious atmospheric change. From the eyes of Ramon flashed the wild spirit of his Irish-Spanish ancestor encountering the choleric face of Elizabeth's old sea-dog; then the Twentieth Century returned, and the young American laughed: "Why, I guess you can sell me this lumber-room stuff—that's all. I've taken a fancy to it and I'll give you a good figure——"

"Sir," interrupted the enraged British householder, "I'll do nothing of the sort!"

"Oh, yes, I guess you will," said Stanley easily. "We don't want to rake up an old quarrel, but I've got about as good a claim to it as you have. I might get the British law to work on lost property—or treasure-trove, or some such thing. I can prove it belonged to us all right."

"I think," said Sir Charles, swallowing his indignation in an access of dignity, "that it is high time to prove *some*thing!"

"Quite right, papa," said Miss Selward, now recovered sufficiently to be her own mistress. "You shall have the whole story of how we came to break into the Bluebeard Chamber. But first you are going to ask Mr. Stanley to tea and let him wash and brush off the dust of centuries, and then we can have explanations by the drawing-room fire——"

"I will not *sell* him anything," growled the British father, marching ahead.

Miss Selward flung a look at Stanley that said quite plainly, "We shall bring him to time"; and to the hunched shoulders of the pink coat she remarked: "You seem to have forgotten how nearly your daughter shared the fate of the mouse. I should think you'd be glad to get rid of the chair that smiled; anyway——"

"—— the——" was the growl that ensued.

But Miss Selward held out her hand to Stanley as a peace-offering. "I think we'd better bury the hatchet," said she. "Probably the ownership of the furniture will adjust itself in time."

* * *

IT WAS not a matter of great surprise in England and America when such an adjustment shortly after took place.

The bride insisted that the leather furniture be kept in seclusion, and the ruby ring thickly swathed in bandages and shown with great care. But whether the chair smiled in reality or in imagination is a point upon which there is dispute to the present day. Some people see it and some don't—that is all.

LOOKING *for* TROUBLE

BEING SOME REAL STORIES FROM THE LIFE of a MASTER ADVENTURER

BY CAPTAIN GEORGE B. BOYNTON

BRAZIL

A BOUQUET OF REVOLUTIONS

WITHOUT knowing where or how the cruise would end, but confident it would lead to trouble—though I did not imagine how much of it there really would be or how unpleasant it would prove—I bought the *Alice Ada*, a brigantine of three hundred tons, and got a general cargo for Rosario, Brazil, on the River Parava. From Rosario I went one hundred miles up the river to St. Stephens and took on a cargo of wheat for Rio Janiero. While the cargo was being unloaded my expectant eye distinguished signs of a nice little revolution which was just being shaped up, so I sold my ship and took quarters at the Hotel Freitas to watch developments.

When the last Emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro II, was dragged out of bed at night and deported without the firing of a shot, in the "peaceful Revolution" of November 15, 1889, Deodoro da Fonseca was made President. Before his weakness had become apparent he was made constitutional President, and Floriano Peixotto was elected Vice-President. Deodoro's policy was weak and vacillating and his popularity waned rapidly. A revolution had been quietly fomented by Floriano, the Vice-President. He soon had the army at his back and gained the support of Admiral Mello, ranking officer of the Brazilian navy, and Admiral Soldanha da Gama, commandant of the naval academy. They brought matters to a head on the morning of November 23, 1891. Mello took up a position at the foot of the main street of Rio in the cruiser

EDITOR'S NOTE—In bringing to a close the story of the adventurous life that came to an end only last January in New York City, Captain Boynton's exploits in Hayti, Jamaica, Colombia and certain of those in Venezuela are omitted. These omitted portions will be published in full in the volume of reminiscences to be issued after the completion of our magazine series.

Riachuelo, the finest ship in the navy, trained his guns on the Palace of Itumary and sent word to Deodoro that he would open fire on him in two hours if he did not abdicate in favor of Floriano. Deodoro abdicated in two minutes, dropping dead soon afterward from heart disease, and Floriano was proclaimed President.

Before he had time to get his new chair well warmed he had a row with Mello, who considered that he was rightfully entitled to be the power behind the throne. Floriano made it plain to him that, while Mello might give friendly advice, he could not go an inch beyond that. Floriano was perhaps one half Indian and the rest corrupted Portuguese; sixty years old, with clear, brown eyes and iron-gray hair and whiskers—a strong, fine character, perfectly fearless, absolutely honest and devoted to his country, whose interests he greatly advanced. He was proud of his Indian blood, which he made a synonym for courage and fairness, and often referred to it. He was the best president I have ever known, not excepting even the great Guzman.

Mello was a younger man and more of a Spaniard in his blood and his characteristics. He had considerable bravery, of the kind that is best displayed in the presence of a large audience, but he was impetuous and at times foolish. At that, he was more a man after my own heart, for he stood for revolt and anarchy, while Floriano stood for law and order. Soldanha da Gama, the third figure in the drama, was a strange mixture of naval ability, cowardice and theatrical warrior.

Mello worked chiefly among naval officers, aristocrats, adherents of Dom Pedro and the Catholic clergy, and in the end they all became his allies. He was unable to shake the army, and the influence of the priests was minimized by the fact that the people generally were blindly in love with the new scheme of self-government, and were loyal to Floriano.

As Mello's plot shaped up I began to suspect that his real purpose was to restore Dom Pedro to the throne and make himself the power behind it. Mello cared nothing for titles; it was his ambition to be the dictator of Brazil. Later events led me to believe that he had an understanding with several European rulers who were keenly anxious to see the "divine right of kings" perpetuated in South America. Dom Pedro had issued a protest against his deposition as soon as he reached Europe, in which all the princes of the house of Coburg joined, and was conducting an active campaign for his restoration.

IT WAS amusing to watch the development of Mello's rebellion. One would have thought two friendly leaders were planning rival surprise parties, in which there was to be nothing more serious than the throwing of confetti. Floriano, surrounded by spies and assassins, but also by many loyal and devoted friends, knew perfectly well, from his own spies, what Mello was doing, but, relying on his own strength and the public sentiment behind him, he made no move to check him. Mello was well aware that Floriano knew all that was going on, yet neither one gave any outward sign of this knowledge and when they were together they appeared to be friends.

It was along in July or August, 1893, that Mello sent for me and expressed a wish that I go down to Santa Catarina Island, off the southern coast of Brazil, and blow up the *Republica*, the one Brazilian warship whose officers had so far remained loyal to Floriano, though finally, just before the revolution was declared, they went over to Mello. With the exception of Soldanha da Gama, who was neutral, but whom he regarded as more of a friend than an enemy, Mello had converted the rest of the navy to his cause. He offered a cash payment and a commission in the navy in return for her destruction, but I could never get him down to definite terms.

While we were still negotiating I received a call from one of Floriano's aides, who asked me to accompany him to the palace. He took me in the rear entrance and up a back stairway to Floriano's private *sala* where, after presenting me, he left me, as I supposed, alone with the President.

"I understand," said Floriano, "that you were in Venezula with President Guzman and have had military training and experience.

"That is correct, sir."

"I am told, too, that you have made a study of high explosives and have invented a remarkable torpedo."

"That is also true."

"Would you be willing to undertake a mission that would involve considerable danger, but for which you would be well paid?"

"I am open to anything except vulgar assassination. That is my business."

"What do you charge for your services?"

"That depends entirely on the nature of the work."

"Then we can leave that question open until the nature of the work has been decided on, provided it is understood that your compensation will be such as you are ordinarily accustomed to."

"Very good, sir."

"Brazil may need your services, Colonel Boynton."

"I beg your pardon," I interrupted. "Captain Boynton."

"I repeat, Colonel Boynton," he replied, with a smile and the suggestion of a bow. "Brazil may need your services, but I can not tell how soon nor in what capacity."

"If I enter your service it will be a loyal service to the end," I told him.

"Consider yourself, then, in the service of Brazil." As he said this he raised his hand and from behind a curtain appeared Captain Cochrane, a descendant of the English Admiral Cochrane, who had fought for Brazil seventy years before.

"As we were strangers I took this precaution," explained Floriano. "It will not be necessary again."

"It was perfectly justifiable," I replied.

Captain Cochrane then repeated in English my conversation with the President to be sure I understood it. Immediately on my arrival at my hotel I sent word to Mello that I would consider no further proposition from him.

MELLO'S REBELLION BREAKS OUT

A FEW days later the revolution was declared, under conditions such as one would look for on the light-opera stage but never in real life, not even in South America. On the evening of September 5th Floriano went to the opera, accompanied by Mello, Soldanha and several other officers of the army and navy, and they all sat together in the Presidential box. Mello and Soldanha excused themselves after the second act. They left their cloaks in the box and said they would be back in a few minutes. Knowing full well the reason for their departure, Floriano bowed them out with an ironical excess of politeness. Soldanha, who had not yet taken sides, though his sympathies belonged to the "rebellion," with which he subsequently allied himself, retired to the Naval School, on an island near the city, and Mello went on board his flagship, the *Aquidaban*.

During the night he assembled his captains and impressively gave them their final orders, with the dramatic announcement that the standard of revolt would be hoisted at sunrise. His fleet, in addition to the flagship, consisted of the *Guanabara*, *Trajano* and *Almirante Tamandate*, protected cruisers; the *Siete de Setembro*, a wooden barbette ship; the gunboat *Centaur* and two river monitors. The protected cruiser *Republica*, whose officers had just decided to join with the rest, was coming up from down the coast, and the *Riachuelo*, with which Mello had forced the abdication of Deodoro, was cruising in the Mediterranean. It was not an imposing force, but it was sufficient to give Mello command of the sea, while Floriano was in control of the forts and the land forces.

At daybreak Mello seized all of the Government shipping in the bay and announced a blockade of Rio harbor. He then sent word to Floriano that if he did not abdicate, without naming his successor, by four o'clock that afternoon, he would bombard the city. This threat was also communicated to the foreign ministers, evidently in the hope that they would try to persuade Floriano to step out, in the interests of peace, but they promptly protested to Mello against any bombardment. Under any circumstances, they told him, unless he proposed to violate the international rules of warfare, he could not bombard until after formal notice of forty-eight hours, to allow the removal of neutrals and non-combatants.

Floriano's reply was an emphatic refusal to abdicate, and, precisely at four o'clock Mello answered it with one shell from a 3-inch gun, which exploded near the American Consulate and killed a foreigner. During the next week Mello fired forty or fifty shots into the city every day, but they did little damage. The fact that they apparently were not aimed at any particular spot probably made no difference in the execution. Frequently he would send boats ashore for supplies, to which nobody paid any attention, and at four o'clock every afternoon the *Aquidaban* would steam solemnly over and engage in a comic-opera duel with Fort Santa Cruz, which was located at the point of the harbor entrance opposite Sugar Loaf Hill.

Mello's shots invariably went clear over the fort, or buried themselves in its walls, while the gunners at the fort could not have hit him if he had stood still for an hour, so no damage was done to either side. After about twenty shots the *Aquidaban* would return to her anchorage, slowly and with great dignity, and hostilities would be over until the next day at the same hour. This daily duel, which was the star act in the serio-comic program, always drew a crowd to the water-front. Business went on as usual throughout the "revolution," which was regarded with amused interest rather than with fear.

EVERY soon after the firing of the first shot, Italian, English, German, Austrian and Portuguese warships appeared at Rio, ostensibly to protect the rights of their citizens, but their prompt arrival, made possible only by the fact that they were cruising close at hand, which was in itself significant, and the attitude they assumed, made it plain to me that they were there under secret orders to aid in the restoration of Dom Pedro. Mello was not a rebel, but a pirate, yet the commanders of these foreign ships, all representing monarchies, gave him their moral support, and, I have always believed, that only the belated arrival of an American naval force prevented them from giving him their active support as well.

Their influence was so strong that when Rear Admiral Oscar F. Stanton, of the United States Navy, finally reached Rio he made the mistake of saluting Mello. For this he was speedily recalled, Rear Admiral Gherardi being sent down to succeed him. Stanton's excuse was that he wished to maintain a neutral position, but no question of neutrality was involved. I know that several of the American naval officers who arrived later shared my view that Mello was a pirate and should have been blown out of the water by the combined fleets. It was evident, from the prompt recall of Stanton, that the Navy Department at Washington held the same opinion, but had not sufficient courage in its convictions to order the suppression of Mello. The ranking officer of the combined fleets was the Italian Vice-Admiral, Magnani. The senior British officer present was Captain Lang, of the *Sirius*. Until the arrival of an officer of flag rank, Captain Henry F. Picking, of the *Charleston*, was the senior officer present of the American navy, and next to him was Captain (now Rear Admiral, retired) Silas W. Terry, on the *Newark*.

A TORPEDO ENTERPRISE

ABOUT a week after the firing of the first shot I was on my way to the water-front to witness the regular afternoon duel between the *Aquidaban* and Fort Santa Cruz, when I was overtaken by a Government carriage, and Colonel Pimental, whom I knew well, asked me to get in with him, as he had orders for me from Floriano. He drove along the shore of the bay to a new galvanized building at a point some distance beyond the island of the Naval School and near the railway machine-shops. On the way he explained that this building had been erected for my use and in it I was to construct, as rapidly as possible, a large torpedo with which to destroy the *Aquidaban*.

I was to have whatever I called for, but from the time the work was begun on the torpedo until it was finished I was to allow no one to enter or leave the building, for fear that word of what was being done would get to Mello's spies. The structure was of ample size and had comfortable living accommodations for ten men, which was as many as I could use. I took up my quarters in the building at once and, after drawing on the master mechanic of the railroad for a lot of copper plates and such other supplies as I would need, got right to work.

Late that evening I heard the rumble of a carriage outside and a moment later in walked Floriano, an old gray shawl around his shoulders, with the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Marine and a Senator. Floriano inquired first as to my comfort and I assured him I was entirely satisfied. Then he said: "I am relying on you, Colonel Boynton, to save Brazil from further trouble by destroying the *Aquidaban*. You will have to make and use your torpedo, with such help as we can give you. Now that you know what you are to do, what is your price?"

I told him I would expect to be paid the appraised value of the ship if I sank her or put her out of commission. After consulting with the others Floriano agreed. We fixed the value of the ship at $600,000 gold, and a contract along these lines was drawn up and signed the next day.

The torpedo I built for this business was the largest I had ever made. It was twelve feet long, four feet in diameter in the middle and carried more than five hundred pounds of dynamite, for I wanted to be certain that the ship would be at least disabled by her contact with it. It floated just below the surface of the water. Floriano came down to witness the final test, and handed me a commission as Colonel in the Brazilian army. He approved the plan of campaign which I had mapped out and said the necessary orders would be issued at once.

"I believe you will succeed," were his parting words. "I hope you will come back as General Boynton!"

WHILE Mello had seized all of the Government vessels in the harbor, there were a few tugs left, which, to prevent his interference, were flying the British flag, on the pretense that they were owned by Englishmen. I was to be given one of these tugs, and my plan was to steal around into Nictheroy Bay at night and anchor close under the hill at the end of the peninsula, where I would be hidden from the rebel fleet. In the morning I would load the torpedo and wait for the daily exchange of cannon courtesies between the *Aquidaban* and the fort. An officer at Santa Cruz was to signal me when Mello left his anchorage and then, towing the submerged torpedo by wire rope too small to be detected, I would steam out across the course of the *Aquidaban*, which would pick up the towing-line on her bow, drag the torpedo alongside and be destroyed by the contact.

The line was 2,000 feet long, supported at intervals by little floats painted the color of the water. I did not think Mello would see anything suspicious in an insignificant little towboat, under the British flag, running diagonally across his bow at a distance of a quarter of a mile. There never has been any doubt in my mind that the plan would have worked perfectly but for the fact that Mello's spies in high places had kept him constantly advised as to what we were doing.

My tug, in charge of a French engineer and four Brazilians, was sent down to me on the afternoon of September 25th, and as soon as it was dark, with the torpedo covered with canvas on deck and twelve 50-pound boxes of dynamite in the pilot house, we steamed around to Nictheroy Bay. To have loaded the torpedo before we started would have been extremely dangerous, for any accidental pressure on one of its arms would have blown all of us to pieces. We anchored well out of sight of the rebel fleet, and as soon as it was daylight I unscrewed the manhole of the torpedo and proceeded to pack it full of dynamite.

CAPTURED BY THE BRITISH

I WAS just putting in the last box of the explosive when there was a shrill whistle, and a launch from the *Sirius* swung alongside. The lieutenant in charge jumped aboard of us and came aft before I could brush the dynamite from my arms.

"Who commands this craft?" he demanded.

"I do," I replied.

"What are you doing with that flag up there?" pointing to the British ensign.

"That flag was there when I came aboard and took command," I said, which was true. "I am flying it for protection from a pirate fleet, just as others are displaying it on Rio Bay and in the city. Your commanding officer has sanctioned that custom by his silence. I am an officer of the established Brazilian Government, obeying the orders of my superiors in Brazilian waters, and I claim the right to take advantage of that custom, if I care to do so, just as others have done and are doing."

"I think the other cases are different from yours," replied the lieutenant. "What is that?" pointing to the dynamite.

"Examine it for yourself."

"It looks like dynamite."

"Probably."

"Well, sir, I am ordered by Captain Lang to take you on board Her Majesty's ship *Sirius*."

It was of no use to make a fight, so I accompanied him, with excessive and sarcastic politeness. He took all my crew with him, leaving a guard on the tug. Captain Lang was on deck waiting for me and was quite agitated when I was brought before him, but he was much more heated before we parted company, and it was a warm day to begin with.

"Captain Boynton, what does this mean?" he roared at me.

"What does what mean?" I innocently answered.

"Your lying over there in a vessel loaded with munitions of war and flying the British flag!"

"It means simply that I am an officer in the Brazilian army, on duty under the guns of a rebel fleet, and that I am flying the British flag for whatever virtue it might have in protecting me from that pirate, Admiral Mello. That flag has been used as a protection by many others and you have silently acquiesced in such use of it."

"But, sir, are you not aware that this is piracy?"

"I am not aware, sir, that it is any such thing."

"But I tell you that it is piracy to fly the British flag over the ship of another nation and carrying munitions of war!"

"It might be just as well, Captain Lang, for you to remember that you are not now on the high seas. An act of the British Parliament is of no effect within another country, and if you will consult your chart you will find that we are in the enclosed waters of Brazil. Under such conditions no mandate of yours which effects my rights can be enforced unless you have the nerve to take the chances that go with your act."

"You may soon find to the contrary!" shouted the Captain, who was letting his temper get the best of him. "I have a mind to send you to Admiral Mello as a prisoner! You know what he would do to you!"

"Oh, Captain Lang!" I said jeeringly. "You know you wouldn't do that!"

"And pray why not, sir?"

"Because you dare not do it, and that's why!" I told him, as I pointed to the *Charleston*, which, with her decks cleared for action, was anchored only a few hundred yards off to port. "I dare you to do it! I defy you to do it! Send me aboard the *Aquidaban* if you dare!"

I was making a strong bluff and I got away with it. The outraged Britisher swelled up with anger and turned almost purple, but he did not reply to my taunt. Instead, he summoned the master at arms and placed me in his charge, ordered his launch and dashed off to the *Charleston*. He returned in half an hour and without another word to me ordered a lieutenant to take me aboard the *Charleston*.

I WILL not deny that I was a bit easier in my mind when I saw my own flag flying over me, yet had I known the treatment I was to receive under it I would have felt quite differently.

It was easy to see, from the reception Captain Picking gave me, that he had been influenced by the attitude of Captain Lang. I told him that I was an American citizen, temporarily in the employment of the Brazilian Government; that I had violated no law of the United States or of Brazil, and I demanded that I be set ashore. He coldly informed me that I would be confined to the ship, at least until he had consulted with the American Minister and communicated with Washington, and soon after I arrived on the *Charleston* I was confined to my room, as a dangerous character who threatened the peace of nations. With this decidedly unpleasant recollection, however, it is a pleasure to know that the other American naval officers, who arrived later, took exactly my view of the whole situation and became champions of my cause. They told Picking that Mello was a pirate and should be treated as such, and that I was being deprived of my liberty without the slightest warrant of law, but they were powerless to accomplish my release.

THE "DETROIT" SHOWS HER TEETH

LOOKING forward a little, the manner in which that old fighter, Rear Admiral Benham, put an end to the "revolution" in the following January, soon after his arrival at Rio, should be well remembered, for it was a noble deed and an example of the good judgment generally displayed by American naval officers when they are not hampered by foolish orders from Washington. In the vain hope of arousing enthusiasm for his lost cause, Mello had gone down the coast, where he figuratively and literally took to the woods when he saw the folly of his mission, leaving Da Gama in command of the blockading fleet. The captains of several American merchant ships, who had been prevented for weeks from landing their cargoes for Rio, appealed to Admiral Benham, who took prompt action.

To show his contempt for the rebels, whom he properly regarded as pirates, Admiral Benham assigned the smallest ship in his squadron, the little *Detroit*, commanded by that great little man, Commander (now Rear Admiral, retired) W. H. Brownson, to escort the merchantmen up to the docks. At the same time he warned Da Gama not to carry out his threat to fire on them when they crossed his line. With his ship cleared for action, Brownson stood in alongside one of the merchantmen. He steamed over close to the *Trajano*, on which Da Gama's flag was flying and which, with the *Guanabara*, was guarding the shore.

"I will recognize no accidental shots," shouted Brownson to the rebel Admiral, "so don't fire any! If you open fire I will respond, and if you reply to that I will sink you!"

As the merchant ship came in line the *Trajano* fired a shot across her bow. Brownson replied instantly with a six-pound shell which exploded so close to the *Trajano* that it threw the water on her forward deck. A musket-shot was fired from the *Guanabara* and it was answered and silenced with a bullet from the *Detroit*.

After seeing his charge safely tied up to dock, Brownson circled contemptuously around the *Trajano* and ordered a marine to send a rifle-shot into her sternpost, as an evidence of his esteem for her commander. The discomfited Da Gama, who was looking for some excuse to end his hopeless revolt, fell over himself getting into his launch, raced over to the *Detroit* and tendered his sword to Brownson. The American told him he had not demanded his surrender, as he seemed to think, and could not accept it, but that he must keep his hands off American shipping if he wished to continue his mortal existence.

The "revolution" ended right there, but unfortunately I was not present to witness its collapse. The august naval authorities were scandalized when this display of good sense was reported to them and they carefully prepared a message of censure to Benham for permitting such conduct, but before it was despatched the New York morning newspapers reached Washington, and after a perusal of their enthusiastic editorials on the subject, a message of commendation was sent to him instead.

I DURING my confinement on the *Charleston* I was occasionally allowed on deck for exercise, but I had no other diversion than to watch the intermittent bombardment of the city and the regularly scheduled exchange of shots between the rebel fleet and the forts. In hope of meeting with greater success, Mello would sometimes engage the forts with several of his ships, and as time wore on there was some improvement in the marksmanship on both sides, though nothing like reasonable accuracy was ever attained. The only incident which was at all exciting was the sinking of the *Javary*, one of Mello's monitors. A shell from Fort Sao Joao dropped between her turrets and, as she heeled over from the explosion, an accidental shot from Fort Santa Cruz struck her below the waterline. She went down by the stern with a rush. The guns in her forward turret were pointed toward the town and they were fired, in a spirit of sheer bravado, just as she disappeared. Mello threw a few shells into the city every day, as evidence that he was still in rebellion, but I was told that less than half a dozen of them did any damage and they certainly produced little excitement. Soldanha da Gama came out in the open and joined forces with Mello while I was on the *Charleston*.

I was not allowed to communicate with any one on shore, and, except from hearsay, Floriano had no means of knowing whether I was alive or dead. Captain Picking claimed to have been told by a church dignitary, who of course was a friend of Mello, that it would be unsafe to set me ashore, as I was certain to be assassinated by Mello sympathizers, but that doubtless was a subterfuge by which he sought to justify his position.

After I had been subjected to this outrageous treatment for two months, I was suddenly transferred to the *Detroit*, which immediately put to sea. Off Cape Frio we met another *Sirius*, a Lamport & Holt liner bound for New York, and, in charge of Ensign James F. Carter, I was transferred to her. We reached New York December 19, 1893, and I was taken to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. An hour after my arrival a message was received from Washington ordering my release. The Navy Department, in line with the vacillating policy then in vogue, took that method of getting me away from the danger-zone.

VENEZUELA

THE ORINOCO COMPANY

IT WAS in vexed Venezuela that I was destined to end my days of deviltry, but not until after a protracted warfare, none the less bitter because it was conducted at long range, with Castro the Contemptible, who came into power two years after I had finally settled down at Santa Catalina as manager for the Orinoco Company. Cipriano Castro had been in Congress as Diputado, or Member of the House, from one of the Andean districts while I was in Caracas with President Crespo, and, though he was regarded as a good fighter and a disturbing element, he was never considered as a Presidential possibility.

With all of my hatred for Castro and everything pertaining to him, it must be admitted that he was an exceedingly shrewd scoundrel. Had he been half as honest he could have made himself the greatest man in South America. He supported Anduesa Palacio, the deposed President, who had betrayed Guzman Blanco, in his final campaign against Crespo, before the latter was recognized as Dictator, and defeated General Morales in the battle of Tariba, May 15, 1892. For some time after that he was in full control of that section of the country, but with the firm establishment of the new régime he gave up the fight.

In recognition of the military ability he had displayed, Crespo offered to make him Collector of Customs at Puerto Cabello. He declined the position, but, egotistically exaggerating the purpose of the proffer, pompously promised Crespo that he would not attempt to overthrow his Government. He then came to Congress, where he would have been almost unnoticed but for the amusement he created by solemnly removing his shoes and putting on black kid gloves every time he sat down to the—to him—herculean task of drafting a bill. He was as rough and uncouth as the rest of the mountaineers; short of stature, secretive of mind and suspicious of every one, excepting only a few of his brother brigands from the Andes.

At the expiration of this term he returned to the hills and bought a farm just across the Colombian border. He posed as a cattle-raiser, but all of the reports that reached Caracas said he was much more of a cattle-rustler, or stealer. He was a persistent tax-dodger, and his herd—which was said to show fifty different brands that represented as many thefts—was driven back and forth across the border to avoid the Venezuelan and Colombian collectors. He was engaged in this profitable pastime when I left Caracas, and had disappeared from all political and revolutionary calculations.

I FIRST arrived at Santa Catalina, whither I had gone on the urgent advice of Crespo, early in 1896. It was a straggling little town, with the company's headquarters standing close to the bank of the Piacoa River, a branch of the Orinoco, opposite the lower end of the Island of Tortola—the "Iwana" of Sir Walter Raleigh.

The building contained a store, with a large supply of goods adapted to the needs of colonists in a new and tropical country, and around it were carpenter-, blacksmith- and machine-shops. The company also owned three small steamers, which were used to bring supplies from Trinidad and run back and forth to Barrancas, thirty miles upstream at the head of the Macareo River, the main estuary of the Orinoco, through which all of the commerce passes. The Atlantic Ocean was 150 miles below us, and Ciudad Bolivar, the principal city on the Orinoco and the head of all-the-year navigation, was 180 miles above.

Tradition says that Santa Catalina was named by Raleigh who, according to the native story, camped there when he was pushing his way up the Orinoco in search of the fabled El Dorado, with its golden city of Manoa. Just above Barrancas are the ruins of a strong fort he built for a part of his force while he went farther on up the river. It is, perhaps, the irony of an unkind fate which pursued the great adventurer, that near this fort, from which searching parties were sent out, is the rich mine of El Callao. If Raleigh had been looking for gold by the pound instead of by the ton, and had searched more carefully, he probably would have found enough to satisfy him.

Stretching away to unmeasured lengths from the pin-prick the headquarters village made in it, was the virgin forest, with its wealth of gold and iron, rubber and asphalt, and its square miles of mahogany, Spanish cedar, rosewood, carapo, greenheart and mora wood, all within the confines of our concession. Far off to the southwest, in a region I never could find time to explore, was the mythical dwelling-place of the people whom Raleigh described—though only on the word of the natives—as having no heads, but with eyes in their shoulders and mouths in their chests, with a long mane trailing out from their spines. Down the Orinoco, half way to the coast, was Imitaca Mountain, a great hill of iron ore which is said to be one of the largest and richest deposits of the precious metal in the world.

THE Jefe Civil at Catalina assisted me in my effort to open up the country, and active operations were soon under way. The natives, who were living just as when Columbus discovered them and wearing no more clothes that could be noticed, were attracted by the prosperity which it was presumed would follow our development work, and little pueblos sprang up along the river on both sides of us.

Our concession covered a territory larger than the State of Massachusetts, nearly all of which was *terra incognita*. It was out of the question to think of trying to go all over it. But for the boundary dispute between Venezuela and England the Orinoco Company never would have secured its concession, for the shrewd Guzman granted it with the idea that Americans would colonize the territory and effectively resist the British invasion.

In their progressive search for gold—the continued pursuit of Raleigh's will-o'-the-wisp—the Englishmen in Guiana were advancing farther and farther into Venezuela and carrying the boundary with them, or claiming that it was always just ahead of them; which, so far as Venezuela's protests went, amounted to the same thing. It was, in fact, the sweet, siren song of gold that caused the establishment of the three Guianas, so that the British, French and Dutch might prosecute the search under the most favorable conditions.

An expedition I made Guianaward was the hardest trip I have ever undertaken and yet one of the most interesting. We had to cut our own trail through the thick underbrush and could carry few supplies, but it was easy to live off the country. Not knowing what to make of us, the jaguar, puma, tapir and ocelot came so close that they were easily shot, while overhead were millions of monkeys, parrots and macaws, to say nothing of great snakes that would have made the fortune of a menagerie manager.

At long intervals we encountered a few wild Indians, living on the banks of rivers, who were terrified until they found we were not tax-collectors sent to take them into slavery on account of their inability to pay extortionate taxes levied for no other purpose than to compel them to work for years without pay. When they became convinced that we meant them no harm they were very friendly and generously offered us things to eat, which I was afraid to touch. They never had seen a white man before and I regretted that some of my friends were not hidden in the bushes to witness the reverence they showed me.

They were armed with bows and arrows, which they used with wonderful accuracy, and crudely fashioned spears, and wore nothing much but feathers in their hair. They lived on fish and game, with yams and plantains, and sometimes corn, as side dishes, and native fruits for dessert, and they were the healthiest looking people I have ever seen. I pushed into this veritable paradise for all of a hundred miles, which carried me close to the border, and discovered one outcropping of gold which will some day be developed into a rich property. Our progress was so slow that it was two months before we were back in Catalina.

A "POPULAR" ELECTION AND A REVOLT

AFTER getting the development work well started I returned to Caracas and early in 1897 resumed my old confidential position with President Crespo. His term expired the following February and I found that he had already decided on General Ignacio Andrade as his successor. He had planned to continue as dictator of the country, *à la* Guzman, and spend much of his idle time and money abroad, and he wanted a man who could be relied on to keep his organization intact and turn the office back to him at the end of his term, for the Venezuelan constitution prohibits a President from succeeding himself.

Donna Crespo, who besides being the greatest smuggler in the country was a shrewd judge of men, had taken a pronounced dislike to Andrade and advised strongly against his selection. Without knowing how truly she spoke, she predicted that if Andrade was made President, Crespo would be dead within six months. I added my advice to the Donna's, for I knew Andrade was a weak man and one who could not be trusted. Powerful friends of Crespo in Trinidad also urged him to select a stronger man, but he could not be moved. He credited Andrade with having saved his life, and planned that he should be made President by the first "popular election" in the history of Venezuela. The peons idolized

Crespo and he had such a strong grip on the country that he was able to carry out his plan, but with disastrous results.

On election day the soldiers at Guatira, Guarenas and Petare doffed their uniforms and donned blouses, with their revolvers strapped on underneath, marched to the polls and voted as often as was required. Other towns throughout the country witnessed the same performance. The peons also voted for Andrade, either because they knew Crespo wanted them to or because the soldiers so instructed them, and they kept at it until the designated number of votes had been deposited. For a popular election it was the weirdest thing that could be imagined.

It was immediately followed by mutterings of discontent from the better class of citizens and on the night of Andrade's inauguration General Hernandez, the famed "El Mocho," who was Minister of Public Improvements in Crespo's Cabinet but an opponent of the new President, took to the hills at the head of 3,000 troops. Crespo really was responsible for the curse of Castro, for had he selected a strong man as his successor the mountain brigand never could have commanded a force sufficiently powerful to overthrow him.

WITHIN a month Andrade went through the form of appointing Crespo Commander in Chief of the army, in order that he might clinch his dictatorship. For a while Crespo contented himself with enjoying his new title and directing operations from the capital, but the Hernandez revolution finally assumed such proportions that he took the field in person to stamp it out. The two armies met in the mountains near Victoria, June 12, 1898. Hernandez was led into a trap, given a drubbing and captured. After the battle Crespo walked across the field and was leaning over a wounded man when he was shot from behind and instantly killed.

It was claimed that the shot was fired from the bush by one of the escaped rebels, but the bullet that killed Crespo was of a peculiar pattern and exactly fitted the pistol of one of his own officers, who was not a Venezuelan. I doubt whether there was another weapon exactly like it in the whole country. The responsibility for the murder could easily have been fixed, but the cowardly Andrade refused to order a real investigation. Crespo's body was packed in a barrel of rum and brought to Caracas for burial.

The capture of "El Mocho" checked the spirit of revolt, but not for long. Andrade had nothing to commend him but his honesty, a quality so little understood in Venezuela that it counted for nothing, and he became more and more unpopular. Only inability to agree on his successor prevented his speedy overthrow.

Some few months after Crespo's death, Castro, who had made himself Governor of the State of Los Andes, visited Caracas and called on Andrade to demand an important position in the new administration, as the price of peace. Andrade, to his credit be it said, flouted him. Castro left the Yellow House in a rage, sought the councils of Andrade's enemies and, after many conferences, a general insurrection was arranged for early the following Summer. The Presidency was to go to the leader who developed the greatest strength during the campaign.

THE RISE OF CIPRIANO CASTRO

CASTRO went back to his mountain home to discover that his cattle had been seized and a warrant issued, at the instance of Andrade's friends, for his arrest for cattle-stealing. He resorted to his old trick of dodging across the border, but a similar warrant was secured from the Colombian Government, which had no more love for the Indian upstart than had the one at Caracas; in fact, Castro at one time seriously considered starting a revolt in Colombia in the hope of gaining the Presidency.

With officers of both countries searching for him he went into hiding and remained under cover until May 23, 1899, when he invaded Venezuela with a force of sixty *peinilleros*, so called from the fact that they were armed with the *peinilla*, a sword shaped like a scimitar. They were the lowest type of Indian, but they were brave and hard fighters. His old cattle-rustling neighbors hailed him with joy, for until then they never had dreamed that any man from the mountains could become a really important factor in Venezuelan affairs, and more than a thousand of them flocked to his standard. He encountered little opposition, and as he captured successive towns he opened the prisons and the freed convicts fell in behind him. When he reached Valencia, less than one hundred miles from Caracas, he had an undisciplined but effective force of 3,000 bloodthirsty brigands. General Ferrer was stationed there with 6,000 well-equipped regulars and, though he was by no means enthusiastic in his loyalty to Andrade, he did his duty as a soldier, according to the quaint standards of the country.

He marched his men out and surrounded Castro, with the exception of a conspicuous hole through which he could escape, and then went into camp for the night. This proceeding was in strict accord with the ethics of that strange land. Except in extreme cases it is the unwritten law that when a rebel leader is encountered by a superior Government force, the regulars must surround him with a great show but be careful to leave a wide hole in their line through which he can run away during the night. Invariably he takes advantage of his opportunity and it is officially announced that he "escaped." Of course, after a rebel chieftain has made several escapes of this kind and still continues in revolt he is surrounded in earnest, but harsh measures are not resorted to until he has had ample opportunity to escape or come into camp and be good.

Castro violated all precedents by failing to run through the hole that had been left for him. When Ferrer saw him the next morning in the middle of the ring, calmly waiting for the fight to begin, he was nonplussed. He could not understand that method of warfare and, concluding that Castro must be a real hero and perhaps, as he even then claimed to be, a genuine "man of destiny," he solved the problem by joining forces with him, for which he was subsequently rewarded by being made Minister of War.

CASTRO learned from Ferrer that he was alone in the revolution, his promised partners having failed to take the field on account of bickerings and jealousies among themselves. This discovery and the addition of Ferrer's forces gave him his first really serious notion that he might become President and he marched forward in a frenzy of bombastic joy. He picked out a star as his own and ceremoniously worshipped it. At Victoria, only thirty-five miles outside of the capital, he made terms with General Mendoza, who was disgruntled with Andrade, and picked up another army.

When the tottering President heard of this final evidence of disloyalty he boarded a gunboat at La Guayra, taking with him a well-filled treasure-chest, and went to Trinidad. The alleged warship leaked badly and Andrade, who had a sense of humor, sent word back to Castro by her commander to have her repaired at once so that she would be in better shape for a hurried departure when it came his turn to be deposed.

By this time the people of Venezuela, believing that no one could be worse than Andrade, and finding out, as had Castro himself, what a powerful person he really was, accepted him as their master. He entered Caracas without opposition October 21, 1900, and, rejecting the modest title of Provisional President, which his predecessors had used, proclaimed himself Jefe Supremo, or "Supreme Military Leader."

He filled all important posts with men from the mountains, on whose loyalty he could rely, and as they were able to secure plenty of graft, not one penny of which was overlooked, he very soon had a tight hold on the country, One of his first acts was to release General Hernandez. He soon found that the old warrior was too patriotic and too dangerous to be at large, so he slapped him back into San Carlos, on the pretense that he was planning an insurrection, and kept him there for years.

March 30, 1901, Castro was elected by Congress to fill out the unexpired part of Andrade's term, and in the following February he was elected Constitutional President. Then began in earnest his reign of robbery, through the establishment of monopolies whose profits went to his private purse, and his vicious anti-foreign policy which, through the murders and injustices committed in its name, made the Boxer uprising in China look like a soft-spoken protest.

I WAS not in Caracas to witness the advent of Castro, as I had returned to Catalina more than two years before, immediately after Crespo's funeral. I had come into possession of a block of stock in the Orinoco Company, which made it better worth my while to stay with it. But it was only the influence of the Jefe Civile that had kept the natives in bounds before, and with the death of my friend, Crespo, that official suddenly became at least lukewarm in his loyalty to the law and to me.

It naturally followed that the natives overran the concession, refused to pay royalty on the balata gum, which they carried off in enormous quantities, and stole everything except the headquarters building and the iron ore, which was too heavy and not worth while. Extortions of all sorts were winked at or openly approved. As Andrade's unpopularity increased, natives took sides and began to spy on each other, with the result that false and malicious reports were sent to Caracas as to the company's attitude.

When Castro took the field Andrade assumed a much more friendly air, but it was too late to be of any value, He sent General Marina up the Orinoco to try to arouse enthusiasm for his cause in the east, which furnishes the only soldiers that can cope with the hardy mountaineers of the west. Mariana told me that if I did my best to hold my district in line for Andrade, the President would grant anything I asked as soon as the revolt was suppressed. At just about the moment this request was made Andrade was fleeing from La Guayra, and Castro was assuming full control at Caracas.

CASTRO AND THE ORINOCO CONCESSION

ALMOST the first thing he did was to annul our concession, along with a dozen others, on the ground that its terms had not been complied with, as the beginning of his war on all foreigners. I denied this right to cancel our grant, especially as it contained a clause which stipulated that any disagreement between the Government and the concessionaire should be referred to the Alta Corte Federal, or Supreme Court, for adjustment. As the case had not been brought before that court I held there could be no legal annulment, even if that power did rest in the executive, which I denied. This contention was subsequently upheld by the International Court of Arbitration, following the blockade and bombardment of the allied Powers, which decided that our concession was still in full force.

When Castro saw that we did not propose to submit to his arbitrary annulment and realizing that so long as I remained on the concession we could claim to be in full possession, he proceeded to harass me in every conceivable way in the hope of making it too hot for me. Under our contract we were to nominate and pay all of the officers within our territory, and the Government was to appoint them. My old chief of police, Abreu, was arrested and taken away on some false charge, and a new man, Tinoco, in whose selection I had no voice, was sent to take his place. He was, I learned, a spy and had orders to send in reports which would make it appear that the company was stirring up revolts and otherwise violating the terms of its concession. This I discovered in time to induce Tinoco, with the aid of a pistol, to sign a statement in which he denied all of his dishonest reports and gave the company a clean bill of health. He died soon afterward.

Castro created a military district known as the Territorio Delta-Amacuro, which took in all of our property, and made Catalina the capital, so that the Governor and the other officials could keep me under their eyes. They all had instructions to make the place so uncomfortable for me that I would leave. Fortunately, when it received its concession the company had bought the land on which its buildings were erected. Only the fact that I was an American citizen and held the deeds to the property restrained them from expelling me by main force and awkwardness. However, I could see trouble coming, so I dug rifle-pits under the porches on the two sides of the house from which we could be attacked. I had plenty of arms and ammunition and about twenty men of whose bravery and loyalty I was sure.

I was prohibited from buying anything at the *pulperia*, or commissary, and we were hard put to it at times for enough to eat. We caught fish in the river, and my men stole out into the woods to hunt at every favorable opportunity, but the moment they left our property they exposed themselves to arrest on some trumped-up charge. Sometimes we were able surreptitiously to buy supplies from the natives, and we managed to get along. I filed protests at Caracas, with the Governor and with my company, but they accomplished nothing. I was told by the officials of the company that they were doing the best they could, with representations to the State Department at Washington, and that I would have to do the best I could, and I did it.

THE troops were continually spying on us and annoying us with fictitious charges, but it was a year or more before the Government, angered by its failure to get rid of me, resorted to extreme measures. A new Governor was sent down with strict orders to remove me, by force if necessary. He advanced toward the house with about seventy-five soldiers. I ordered my men into the rifle-pits and met the General at the gate.

"What do you want?" I demanded fiercely.

"I beg your pardon," replied the commander, with all the treacherous suavity of his race, "but I have orders to take you under my care and escort you to Trinidad in order that no injury may come to you. Our country is troubled and the Government is anxious as to your safety."

"My compliments to President Castro," I told him, "and assure him that I feel perfectly secure here, and quite comfortable. You can also tell him that I propose to stay here."

"That is much to be regretted," responded the still overly polite general, "for in that case I have to inform you that my orders are to arrest you and take you to Trinidad."

"In that case," I said, imitatively, "I have to inform you that you will find it impossible to carry out your orders and I advise you not to attempt it!"

"You mean that you will resist arrest?" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Most assuredly," I replied. "This is my property. You have no right to invade it, for I have violated no law of Venezuela. If you enter on it, I will fire on you!"

"But," he almost shouted, as he waved his arms excitedly toward his ennervated patriots, "my men are here to enforce my orders! You would be insane to resist! You do not know the Venezuelan army, sir!"

"You are mistaken," I told him. "I *do* know the Venezuelan army. It is you who are ignorant. You do not know *my* army! It is because I know both that I have no fear. You have not a shadow of right for seeking to arrest me, and your blood will be on your own head if you advance!"

With this declaration which, in keeping with the comic-opera custom of the country, was delivered with all the dramatic effort I could throw into it, in order that it might carry greater weight, I retired to the house.

WE HAVE A LITTLE FIGHT

THE General could see my rifle-pits, but he did not know how many men they held nor how well they could shoot. After a short consultation with his staff, he gave the order to advance, while he bravely directed operations from the rear. As his men crossed the line we fired and eight of them fell. They continued to advance and we fired again, dropping nine more of them, while several others were hit. That was too much for them and they broke and ran, leaving seven dead and ten badly wounded.

They did not fire a shot, perhaps because our men were so well concealed that Venezuelan marksmanship would have accomplished nothing against them. The General and his staff returned in an hour and asked permission to remove his fallen warriors. After burying their dead they returned to their steamer and went on up the river.

In two or three days they came back, with their force slightly increased, and the General again called on me to surrender under penalty of being arrested as a disturbing factor. I gave him the same reply as before and, after thinking it over for a while, he marched his troops away again.

That little encounter produced pronounced respect for the Americans among Castro's soldiers and they did not give us much trouble afterward, though they continued to annoy us for a time. With the establishment of the blockade of Venezuelan ports by the allies—England, Germany and Italy—in the latter part of 1902, and the signing of the peace protocols at Washington early in the following year, there came a cessation of hostilities against us. So far as driving us off the concession was concerned, Castro seemed to have given up the fight, but on account of the disturbed condition of the country and the fact that the Government was known to be inimical to us, it was impossible to do anything of consequence toward the development of the property.

This enforced idleness eventually became intolerable, and early in 1906, the company in the meantime having sent one of its officers to Caracas to protect its interests, I returned to New York, after having held the fort for ten years. I came back much poorer in pocket, but with a fund of information regarding Venezuela and its people.

POOR VENEZUELA'S GOLDEN FUTURE

I HAVE been in every country in South America, and have studied all of them, and there is no possibility of doubt that Venezuela is beyond comparison the richest in its natural resources. With the setting up of a firm and civilized government, which must come in the end, under an American protectorate if by no other means, all of the fairy-stories that were told of it centuries ago will come true, and its development will eclipse all of the dreams that have been realized in our own country.

It is a strange fact that Cumana, in Venezuela (their respective names then being New Toledo and New Grenada), which was the first European settlement in South America of which there is authentic record, was founded one hundred years, less one, before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. In each case there was a fervent prayer for divine aid in establishing a Christian colony and building up a great country. Why one prayer was answered and the other was not is a question I will not attempt to answer.

Like her West Indian neighbors—of which beautiful isles Americans now know so little, but of which they will know much more when their flag flies over all of them, as it must within the life of the present generation—Venezuela has been treated most bountifully by nature and most brutally by man. Cursed they all may have been by the seas of innocent blood in which they were barbarously bathed during their extended infancy and their prolonged childhood, from which they have not yet merged. It seems that all the powers of darkness have conspired to retard their growth and hold them slaves to savagery. Accustomed from the days of the Spanish *conquistadores*, and the pirates who followed them, to being plundered and persecuted in every way that the mercenary mind of man could devise, the Venezuelans have grown so hardened to turmoil and torture that it has become second nature to them to live in an atmosphere which generates riot and robbery.

Their blood is an unholy mixture of Indian, Carib and Spanish, with other and more recent strains of all sorts. They are the most inconsequential, emotional, ungrateful and treacherous people on the face of the earth—and yet I love them. The ambition of their leaders runs only to graft, while the underlings yearn for war as a child cries for a plaything. At the behest of some self-constituted chieftain, who has strutted in front of a mirror until he imagines himself a second Simon Bolivar, they rise in rebellion because it gives them a chance to prey on the country, and, if their revolt is successful, to continue and extend their preying. But some day a real man will rise up among them and lead them out of their blackness and butchery into peace and prosperity, and Venezuela, with her wild waste of wealth, will become great beyond the imaginings of her discoverers.

THIS is not the full story of my life, but it tells some of the incidents that I have enjoyed the most. My best fight was with old Moy Sen, the pirate king, in the China Sea, and my closest call was when I was sentenced to be shot at sunrise in Santo Domingo. These events supplied the most delightful feasts of the excitement which my nature has ever craved, yet I have lived well, in that respect, all along. I have fought under nineteen flags and I am proud of the fact that I gave to each of them, and to every one of my undertakings in a life-long search for adventure, the best that was in me.

I have no disappointments and no regrets, except that this existence is too short. If I had my life to live over again it would be lived in the same way, though, I would hope, with a still greater share of excitement, because it was for just such a life that I was created. What the purpose of it was I neither know nor care, nor am I in the least concerned as to what my destiny next holds in store for me. I hope, however, that in some land with opportunity for wide activity I will be reincarnated as a filibuster and a buccaneer and that I will so continue until my identity is merged into a composite mass of kindred souls.

THE AWAKENING

BY OWEN OLIVER

I WOKE suddenly in a strange place—a long room with light oak carving. I was lying on soft cushions on the floor. A rug had been thrown over me, but I was dressed. There were two long rows of sleepers—men, women, and children—and a number was put at the head of each. Mine was "214,-713, London." One or two numbers had a name underneath, but mine was not there. It was Elsie Anderson, if I remembered myself rightly; but my memories did not come readily.

My left-hand neighbor was holding my wrist. He was "184, Government, George Raynor." I remembered the name, and when I raised myself on one elbow, to take a good look at his face, I remembered him. I had met him once at an at-home. He was a nice fellow and I liked him. He had said that he hoped we should meet again.

Next I noticed a manuscript in my right hand. I pulled it out and read the title: "The History of the Years of Sleep: 1916–1920. By George Raynor."

I gave a sharp cry. If it was 1920, I had slept for four years! I made an effort to remember what happened to me. I was going to town for a singing-lesson, and there were swarms of little green flies at Dulwich Station. They stung people, and the people whom they stung fainted. I screamed and tried to beat off the flies with my handkerchief, but they flew upon me—and that was the last thing I remembered. I must have fainted; and the faint had lasted for four years! Perhaps longer, for more years might have passed since Mr. Raynor wrote the history.

How had I come to this place? Where was it? Who were the other sleepers? Why did he put the book under my pillow? Why did he hold my hand? I guessed that it was a big hospital or building where they had put the sleepers for their security; and I thought that Mr. Raynor had brought me there because he knew me, and that he held my hand because he expected me to be frightened when I woke alone. I *was* frightened—so frightened that I dared not move or call. For I did not know what might have happened in all these years, and something dreadful must have come again to send Mr. Raynor to sleep.

I lay still for a long time, shivering and listening. I heard no sound but the faint breathing of the sleepers. I thought that every one but myself must be asleep. Then I heard a howling somewhere outside, the howling of wild beasts. It came nearer and nearer, till at last it was outside the window. The window seemed to be a good way above the ground, but I wasn't sure. I clung to Mr. Raynor's arm and begged him to wake, but he did not stir. He and the rest were evidently in a deep faint or stupor. I gave a scream, and then I fainted, too. The noise had gone when I recovered.

As soon as I was able to rise I got up and staggered to the door, but dared not open it. I staggered toward the windows, but dared not look out. I feared to find the world in the possession of the howling beasts, or of some unknown monsters. I went and shook Mr. Raynor again, and called in his ear, entreating him to wake, but without the slightest effect.

I sat down again on my cushions—I seemed to have been made more confortable than any one else, and I was sure that I had to thank Mr. Raynor for that—and took up the "history"; but I was afraid to read it and learn what horrible things had come to pass—perhaps to find that I was all alone. I prayed a prayer that some one might be still waking in the world and come to me. And then I heard voices in the passage.

At first I thought they came in answer to my prayer, but, after listening for a few moments, some instinct checked the call on my lips. I went cold with fear, and lay down hastily and covered myself and the book with the rug, and pretended to sleep. "They are enemies," I told myself. "Enemies! If they should come in——!"

They came in, and I peeped at them under my eyelashes. They were a red-faced, elderly man and a gray-haired lady, with a pale, handsome face and cold, cruel eyes. It was she whom I feared. I think I should have spoken to the man, if he had been alone, though I did not like him.

"SINCE you *will* see him," he said, speaking as if she had annoyed him, "there he is!" He jerked his head toward Mr. Raynor, and she knelt beside the unconscious sleeper.

"He is due to wake in three days?"

"Yes," he answered; "and the girl the day after, according to the books; but the reinoculations do not always last their full time, you know. She might happen to rouse a day sooner; two or three days even."

"Oh, *she!*" said the woman scornfully. "She doesn't matter. She goes to-night, with the rest of them."

"You can't dispose of them all," the man protested. "We must have some to fight the cursed wolves. It's no use shaking your head. We must, I tell you! We needn't rouse them all, but I can't get along without a few thousand men. The beasts are getting too much for me. You know what it was like coming here."

"Yes, yes," she said. "You can have your men; but we don't want women; at any rate, not her. She dies to-night!"

"Very well," he said rather sulkily. "The women can go—those of this batch. You'll have to save some of the later sections, or you'll have a mutiny. But it doesn't matter about her in particular. She's just an ordinary, stupid, pretty girl, so far as I can see. The only point is that he has an infatuation about her. The important question is, what are you going to do about *him?* I rather like the chap, but——"

"I don't know," she said, rocking herself to and fro. "He has disobeyed three times. I gave my word that the third time he should die— He is so like my son!"

"I suppose," the red-faced man commented, "your son was like *you.* If *he* is, and he wakes and finds that you have made away with this '214,713, London' of his, he'll kill you! If you must wake him, why not wake the girl and let him have her? He'll be all right then. If you kill her and spare him, he'll be our worst enemy. I warn you."

"He'd be my enemy anyhow," the woman said bitterly. "He would not serve me as I need service, for his own life, or even for hers. They must go to-night with the rest of their batch. Keep 6,000 men—no women and children; 2,000 of them in London. The rest in the usual proportions. Telegraph at once. Yes. He must die. But he's like my son!"

She bent and kissed him, laughing a strange laugh. It reminded me of the howling of the beasts. Then she rose.

"My last weakness," she said. "It's over. I shall go on to the end now, do not fear."

"I've never feared anything all my life, except *you,*" the red-faced man said. "Sometimes I think you're the salvation of the world. Sometimes I think you're the Devil! I don't know."

"I don't know myself," said the gray-haired woman.

Then they went, and I fainted again.

WHEN I came to, I judged from the light that it was the afternoon. I felt weak and ill and very thirsty, and so terrified that I could not think properly. I believe I should have simply lain still and waited to be killed, if Mr. Raynor had not been before my eyes and if I had not felt sure that I owed my life, so far, to him.

"They shall *not* kill you!" I declared, and sat up and clenched my teeth and hands, and made myself consider what I could do to save him. I decided that the first step was to read the history, which would probably enable me to understand the situation better.

It was a long story—far too long to set down here; but the main points were these.

The fly—but some people said it was a poison-dust, not an insect—appeared everywhere, all over the world, August 24, 1916, and stung people into a dense stupor. Nearly all the inhabitants of the earth went into the sleep, the account said. Those who remained awake were almost all clever, cruel people. They formed new governments, and called the head people "Powers." The Chief Power in England was the gray-haired woman. Her name was Ashbury. She did not wish the sleepers to wake, because she wanted to go on ruling. So she proposed to kill them. The Power of the World, an American Jew named Abrahams, who had been a hotel-keeper and considered a bad and unscrupulous man, but who was really a good one, would not agree to this. But, when the sleepers seemed likely to wake, he had to inoculate them, to make them sleep longer, because there wasn't food for them.

He tried to grow food, but the harvests were bad, and the dogs, who had become like wolves from hunger, overran the country. There were pestilences and storms, and those who "woke" were in great trouble; but at last there was a good harvest, and, after most of it had been sown for the next year, he thought it would produce enough to keep everybody. So he persuaded most of the "wakers" to go to sleep too, until it would be ready, so as to economize supplies. That was how Mr. Raynor came to go to sleep. He did not know if he would wake, for the Chief Power was plotting to depose the Power of the World, and if she did, she was sure to kill most of the sleepers.

He had rescued me, and the "disobediences" for which she wished to kill him were all on my account. There was a Chief Physician, and he was a good man and had helped him, and liked me. He was one of those left awake. He said that he meant to dance at my wedding with Mr. Raynor. (The history made it quite plain that Mr. Raynor was in love with me.) He called me "pretty little 214,713, London." The sleepers had all been numbered, and I suppose the "wakers" had been numbered first, because Mr. Raynor was 184.

II

I DECIDED at once that I would try to find the Chief Physician. The history said that he lived in the building where we slept. (It was the War Office.)

I opened the door and looked into a very long corridor, paneled with brown wood. It was quite empty. I lifted Mr. Raynor in my arms and staggered out with him, and went up-stairs. On the walls there were printed plans of the floor. There were only numbers on them, but one or two had been written across in red ink, "Captain of Guard," and so on. On the top floor I found "Chief Physician" marked on one.

I opened the door, and staggered in. Mr. Raynor was big and heavy, and I am only small. I was so exhausted that I fell; and then I heard a voice—a kind voice that did not frighten me. "2-1-4-7-1-3, London! Good girl!"

"Water!" I begged. "Water!"

"I can't move, my dear," the voice said.

I wiped my eyes and looked up, and saw a gentleman rather like my father, bound to a chair; and I got up somehow and tried to untie him.

"You'll never do it with those little fingers," he said. "There's a penknife in my waistcoat pocket; left hand; *my* left; the lower one. That's right!"

I cut the knots and he got up and staggered about, stamping and shaking himself to get rid of his stiffness. He asked if I had read the history, and I said yes; and he told me what had happened afterward.

Mrs. Ashbury had gone to America, with a shipful of armed men, to try to kill the Power of the World; but he had been prepared, and had taken them by surprise as they were landing, and defeated them.

So she and those who were left had come back in another ship. She had broken away from the other Governments, and those in England who did not agree with her had fled abroad, or had been killed, unless it was a party in Lancashire, led by a "Suffragette lady," who had been one of the Powers under Mrs. Ashbury, but would never agree to harming the sleepers. He did not know her fate. Mrs. Ashbury and her followers meant to wake only enough of the sleepers to fight the wolves—and perhaps a few women and children later—and to kill the rest. He had refused to help in the slaughter, and they had to get another doctor to help them. So they threatened to kill him with the first batch that very night.

"I'm afraid they will, little one," he said; "and you, too. We might possibly get away by ourselves; but not with—our burden." He shook his head at Mr. Raynor, whom I had lifted on a couch. "I don't suggest your going alone," he added, "because——"

"Because, if I would, I'm not worth saving," I said. "No. Of course I wouldn't leave him; and you wouldn't, because—he trusted you; and I do. But can't you wake him?"

"No; not till the three days are up. We must try to save him till then."

He considered for a long while with his chin on his hand.

"I can think of only one way," he told me at last, "and I fear it requires courage beyond your power, my brave little lady."

"If there is only one way," I said, "of course I must try. What is it?"

He did not answer my question at once, but thought again, staring at me as if he did not see me.

"I WANT you to understand the situation," he said. "It is fairer; and, besides, you may see some better plan. It would be possible to get out of this building. There are guards at the doors, but we could get through a window on the ground floor. There are thousands of empty houses where we could hide, if we once got away and if we escaped the wolves—and the human wolves, the followers of the Chief Power. If you and I were alone, there would be a chance; a poor one, but I think our best. With our friend here to carry, there would be no chance at all of escaping so." A howling rose in the distance, and he took me to the window looking down Whitehall to Big Ben. "Look!" he said; and I looked, and clung to him.

A large party of armed men—about two hundred—were coming from Parliament Street in our direction. Innumerable wolves—dogs of all kinds and sizes, and yet changed from dogs—were following. Sometimes they approached so near that the men faced round with fixed bayonets, or axes. Sometimes a few ran by the side of the party and snapped at men till they were stabbed; and then the other wolves rushed upon them and devoured them.

"They go in flocks," he told me, "but they rush down all the streets in turn; and with our friend to carry we could never get away from them, or from the patrols. No, we can't escape that way."

"What is your plan?" I asked.

"We might hide in chimneys, or under the floors; but they would be sure to trace us. It's a poor plan."

"Yes," I agreed. "What *is* your plan?"

He looked at me again for a long while. Then he told me.

"That you should go back to your places," he said, "and let them think that they kill you. They propose to do it by injecting poison. If they have not changed its prescription—you must risk that—I can inoculate you with an antidote. It will take away all power to move, and a good deal of your sensibility; not all. You will suffer—suffer in body and in mind, my poor child, but you will live. In a day or so you and he will wake. You are both young and active, and he is bold and resourceful. They will probably give up watching the dead. You may escape then—escape, I hope, to a long and happy life together."

"And you?" I asked. "*You*, dear friend?"

"Oh, well," he said, "I had to die anyhow."

"I will take no chance of safety that you do not share!" I declared. "He would not, if he were alive—awake, I mean. I answer for his honor. And he shall not wake to find that I deserted you!"

"I shall go out and chance escaping the wolves," he stated. "You see, it would be no use inoculating myself. When they found me unbound and yet unconscious, they might suspect my plan, and—and make sure of me! Probably of you and of him, too."

"They shall not find you unbound," I said. "I will bind you as I found you, and inoculate you. Then I will inoculate him; and then myself. And when I wake—if I wake—I will come to you."

"Ah, my dear!" he said. "You are brave! But are you brave enough?"

"I have to be!" I said.

We ate and drank. Then we carried Mr. Raynor back to his place, and the Chief Physician inoculated him, showing me how to do it. He marked the place on his own flesh and mine when we went to his room. He kissed my forehead. "The good God strengthen you!" he prayed.

Then he sat in his chair, and I bound him. "If we live, I will be a daughter to you," I promised, "and he will be a son." Then I inoculated him. He went quickly into a stupor.

"Hide—the syringe—before you—go—too—numb," he gasped faintly. Then he said no more. Even his eyes did not move, but they were open, and I believed that he could still see and hear.

"I shall be brave," I told him. "Do not doubt me."

I kissed his forehead, and went out into the deathly stillness of the empty corridors, and back to my place. I must have screamed if I had not bitten my lips.

The good God must have given me strength, as the Chief Physician said, for I never faltered in my resolution. I wrote on the history what had happened, so that Mr. Raynor might go and rescue the Chief Physician if he woke and I did not. After that I sat by him for a few moments, with my arm round his neck, and my face against his.

"I hardly know you," I said, "but you love me. And I love you. God help us, dear!"

Then I lay down, covered myself with the rug, dug the syringe into my flesh and pumped in the antidote. I only just succeeded in removing it, the numbness came on so quickly. Then I lay waiting; motionless, unable to stir an eyelid or make a sound, and yet dimly conscious of everything round me—more than dimly conscious of fear. The light grew dimmer and dimmer. I heard the wolves howl four times before I became unable to distinguish Mr. Raynor's face; once more, and then it was quite dark. I heard them howl three times more; and then the death-dealers came, talking to one another unconcernedly, as if they went about some routine task.

There were eight of them. Two women and a man carried lanterns. Three men had large syringes. A lad carried a pail of fluid from which they replenished them. The red-faced man watched. They went along the room in pairs, one holding the lantern while the other knelt by the sleeper and made the injection—two strokes of the piston with a pause between. One pair came to Mr. Raynor and another to me at the same time. I was too numb to feel pain when the great syringe dug deeply into my flesh, but it was well for me that I could not scream. As it was, I made a faint sound.

"Must have been near waking," the injector said, putting the rug over my shoulders again. "Well, she's safe for another four months." Evidently he had not been told that he was administering anything but the usual sleeping-injection. To the credit of my countrymen and countrywomen I would record that it is now clear that Mrs. Ashbury deceived them about her intentions, and that very few of them realized that she intended to kill the sleeping world.

"Make *him* quite safe," the red-haired man commanded, nodding toward Mr. Raynor. "He's a dangerous man."

"He's had the usual dose," the operator answered. "The Chief Physician always said that more was dangerous."

The red-faced man made no comment, and they passed on, finished their work, and went out. The wolves howled right under the window just then. Soon afterward I went to sleep. I felt as if a weight were crushing me; and I thought that perhaps the antidote had failed. I did not seem to care about myself—it would be good to be at rest, I thought—only about Mr. Raynor and the Chief Physician.

III

IN the early light I woke in great pain. I remembered that the Chief Physician had said that I should suffer. I was glad that Mr. Raynor was unconscious. I thought that if I woke fully I should wake mad. Presently some men came in, and I feared that I should go mad in my stupor.

They did not look at Mr. Raynor or me. Some one called out "214,717" and "214,725," and they carried off two sleepers, both big men. I suppose they were selected to wake and fight the wolves.

"You can leave the doors open," the voice called. "The wolves won't matter now."

Then I think I did go mad for a time. I seemed to be struggling with a tempest of pain and fright, till I became unconscious once more.

I woke, still racked by sharp pains, to find the gray-haired woman kneeling beside Mr. Raynor. She was crying. I tried to call to beg her to keep out the wolves, but no sound would come. When she went, however, she closed the door. I forgot my pains in my thankfulness that we were safe from the wolves, and slipped back into sleep. Sometimes I roused a little at a pang of pain, or rather, after it. For I knew that I had been hurt, rather than felt it. Sometimes I dreamed of green fields, and brooks, and music. Sometimes I dreamed that stones were being heaped and heaped on me.

The dawn of another day was beginning when I became fully conscious again. The pains were not so violent, and presently they left me almost entirely. I could not hear Mr. Raynor breathe, but I thought that he did. The others were still—quite still. I could not speak, but I could move my eyelids. I blinked and blinked. Presently I could move a little finger; then all my fingers. Gradually the use of my limbs returned, and I sat up, aching all over—not violently, but with a kind of cramp, and feeling as if I had just come to from "gas" at the dentist's.

Mr. Raynor was still "sleeping," and the Chief Physician had said that he would not wake until some time after us. So I was not worried on his account, after I had ascertained that he really breathed—which was the first thing I did. I was too weak to lift him, and I thought that probably the guards below were gone, and the wolves. So I decided to go up-stairs alone and untie our kind friend, if he still lived. In case I should never return I wrote on the cover of the history and put it beside Mr. Raynor:

> I have gone for the Chief Physician. If I do not return, I shall have died. If we live, I will do what you wish. God bless you. 214,713, London.
>
> ELSIE ANDERSON.

The corridors were empty, but I felt sure that I heard wolves upon the floors below, so I ran as fast as my shaking legs would carry me. I found the Chief Physician alive and evidently coming to, but not able to speak. I unbound him and rubbed his hands and bathed his face. In about half an hour he could just stand. Then I heard a sound in the corridor. *Pit-pat, pit-pat!* I shut the door, and the wolf came and scratched at it and whined and barked. It went away and came again. At last the Chief Physician stumbled to a cupboard and got two axes and two revolvers.

"Take some for him," I proposed; for, of course, I knew that we should go down to Mr. Raynor at all risks.

"He won't wake yet," our friend assured me. "It's no use burdening ourselves. We shall have to fight our way, I expect." He seemed quite cheerful at the prospect of the struggle. "Use the ax when you can, and take the revolver in your left hand. We'll settle this one first. I'll jam his head in the door. Get ready!"

He opened the door a little. The wolf—it had been a big bull terrier—forced its head through the opening, and I brought the ax down.

"That's one!" said the Chief Physician. "Come on!" And we went out. Strange to say, I had no fear; I felt like a machine.

There were no other wolves on the two upper floors, but some were coming up the stairs from the second floor, where Mr. Raynor was. They retreated before us, growling and snarling. About twenty waited at the foot of the stairs. We had to reach a door some twenty yards along the corridor. We shot three of the beasts, and the others fell upon them; then we made a rush and reached the room. One wolf tore my dress, but the Chief Physician killed him. Another got half through the door after us and caught the Chief Physician's boot, but I blew out its brains.

Mr. Raynor was breathing very faintly. The Chief Physician listened to his heart and felt his pulse. He shook his head several times, and I gasped for breath.

"I do not know the exact effect of the poison and the antidote on a sleeper," he said at last. "I hope he will wake, but—I do not know. I have done my best, Elsie."

"You have done your best," I said, "your very best, dear friend. But if he does not live I do not want to. Is there nothing you can do? *Nothing?*"

"If I could get a stimulant from my room," he said, "it might help him. There is nothing really wrong. It is a question whether his heart is strong enough to outlast the struggle between the poison and the antidote. The heart beats more feebly in the sleep, you see. Are you brave enough to be left?"

"I am brave enough not to let you go alone," I answered.

We went to the door, and peeped out. The wolves had gone. So we decided to take Mr. Raynor up-stairs again, carrying him between us.

We were half-way up the first stairs when we heard a terrific howling overhead, and the shouts of men, and a few women. The wolves had evidently gone up above; and the "wakers" had gone by another way and were pursuing them in force. The fight for which the Chief Power had awakened some of the slumberers was beginning. Shots were fired, and we heard the blows of axes; the wolves seemed to be running along the corridor to the stairs.

"Back to the room!" the Chief Physician cried. But as we reached the corridor the voice of the Chief Power rose above the others, and with one accord we fled down the next staircase. For we thought that she might come in the room to look again at Mr. Raynor. We feared her more than all the wolves.

We reached the main hall, breathless and staggering with our burden; and then the wolves overtook us. They were too terrified to do any harm, but swept on like a sea, knocking us down on the slippery tiled floor and running over us. The pursuers followed in the rear, smiting with their axes, till the wolves were killed or had got through the doorway, running over one another, three, four, five high. Then we sat up, and the guards formed between us and the doorway, waiting for orders from the gray-haired woman.

She stood at the foot of the white marble stairs, with little streams of red blood running down them, and faced us. She was motionless, like the statue of some evil deity. Mr. Raynor opened his eyes and moved his lips. The Chief Physician and I knelt, holding him between us. He smiled faintly at me, and I smiled at him, putting my arm round him and drawing him against me.

"We live for a moment together," I whispered; "and perhaps—afterward." For I saw in her eyes that she would kill us.

There was a long silence, and all waited with their eyes on her.

She moved her lips silently before she spoke. She addressed the Chief Physician.

"Traitor!" she said in a clear, stern voice. "Traitor to us all!" She turned to the rest. "He cabled to Abrahams!" she told them, and there was a fierce murmur.

"Yes," the Chief Physician told her. "I cabled to the Power of the World—your master and mine. It is you who are the traitor—traitor and murderess!"

"Your Power of the World has not come," she taunted him. "He does not govern England, and you are a traitor to your country."

"You are a traitor to mankind!" he answered. "He *will* come, and then he will kill you!"

"And now," she said very quietly, "I will kill you."

"I expected nothing else," he said. "But, if there is a spark of womanhood or humanity in you——" He was going to ask her to spare us, but she cut him short.

"There is none," she said, "for traitors! Kill them!"

The crowd advanced upon us, but she made a quick motion with her hand. "Take them outside," she commanded, passing her hands over her eyes. She sank on the marble steps with her dress dabbling in the blood, and the men seized us and dragged us through the doors. Our arms were round one another, and they did not separate us.

"All in vain," the Chief Physician muttered; "your courage; and yours!"

"And yours," said Mr. Raynor, "old friend!"

"No," I said. "Not in vain, not in vain, my dears! There will be an awakening!" And I kissed my lover and my friend, and they kissed me.

IV

AND then we passed through the doorway, and the wolves rushed upon us like a stormy sea. There were thousands of them—tens and tens of thousands, wolves that had once been dogs, all kinds, all sizes. They covered the wide road and more, for they ran on top of one another. They came from both directions, and from each way a great army of men and women pursued them in serried ranks, axes in hand—axes dripping red.

The guards dropped us and ran within the doors. The wolves knocked us down, as before, and swarmed over us; swarmed in heaps that crushed us and almost stifled us; rose like a great wave to the top of the doorway and fell in, one wave after another.

I caught a glimpse of the marble stairway, and wolves were pouring down that, springing at the throats of those who tried to pass up it. I saw the gray-haired woman fall with a dozen holding her. Shrieks and shrieks and shrieks came from inside.

Outside, the men and women, coming both from Charing Cross and from Westminster, slew and slew. Every now and then a rush of the wolves—those that were not driven into the building or killed—swept them off their legs. The men and women closed up again and still slaughtered. I can see one little fair-haired woman now, smiting and smiting and smiting. She was a mistress from my old school, and she had always been such a gentle little thing; but the wolves had killed her child.

They killed the heap on top of us, throwing them aside as they slew them and smiting the next. We rose red with the slaughter, and a man, also red, held out his hand to the Chief Physician—a stout, panting, disheveled old Jew man, who seemed to be directing everybody.

"You are the Chief Physician," he said, "aren't you? They showed me your photo. I am Abrahams; I came at your call."

They stood there, forgetting every one but themselves, and talked, while the others went into the War Office to finish the last of the wolves. They would have slain the human wolves, too, I think, if any had been left; but there were none. They knew the Chief Power only by her dress.

The Power of the World told how he had come with a handful of men, at the Chief Physician's summons. If England did not rise to support him he must die, he knew. "We run that risk every day," he said, "and I believed in England." His belief had been justified. The people had gone over to him everywhere, as soon as they knew what Mrs. Ashbury intended; and though hundreds of thousands of sleepers had been poisoned under her orders—her tools mostly believing that they were merely using the sleeping injection—he had been in time to stop most of the slaughter.

About thirty thousand of the first batch of sleepers had already roused and joined him. He was clearing away the wolves and seeking Mrs. Ashbury and the remains of her Government—who, it seemed, had not heard of his arrival—"to clear them away, too." But their fellow-wolves had done it for him.

"We are saved," he declared, "if we can get through the next few days. We have to draft the people to their homes without losing trace of them, and to get the food supplies distributed to them. We must work, work, work! Nothing like work!" said the stout, disheveled, big old Jew man, who looked like a butcher. I had expected a noble patriarch, and I felt disappointed in him—then. Now I know that he is greater than all the rest.

Mr. Raynor and I had said little all the time, only held hands tightly and looked into each other's eyes.

"You are mine," he said. "Dear—I do not know your name, but you are mine."

"It is Elsie," I told him. "Yes. I am yours."

And then the Chief Physician touched the arm of the Power of the World.

"Here are two of our best," he said. "*They* will work."

The Power of the World held out his hands to us, and smiled; and then he seemed no longer an old Jew, and something more than a man.

"You are doing the best work in the world," he told us; "just loving! Never leave off, my dears!"

That was his text and the battle-cry that led us through the struggle of the next fortnight. "For the love of those who sleep!" he urged, when some grumbled at our privations. "For the love of those who suffered to save you!" he told those who woke, when their weakened bodies halted at their labors—for we worked till we dropped in those days. "For the love of your old leader!" he pleaded, when even we who were round him thought his counsels too hard.

His last words as Power of the World—in the speech by which he restored the old rulers and resigned all power and place—were the same.

"The best work in the world," he said, "is the work that all can do—just to love one another. I have done only that. But if you think you owe anything to me, who owe everything to my faithful followers; if you think that the waking of the world is due in any part to my efforts, make it a world of love and good-fellowship—a world that was worth making!

And so, because all the world loved him, every country all over the earth passed one great law of peace and fellowship and good-will; and, to mark the fact that the days of war and strife were over, the calendar of the years was started afresh; and I, Elsie Raynor, formerly Anderson, wife of George Raynor, Secretary of the Traffic Reorganization Board, write this account in Year One of the Awakening.

THE EMERALD BUDDHA

BY FREDERICK ARNOLD KUMMER

CHAPTER I

MR. ASHTON

THE dull October afternoon was rapidly drawing to a close as I passed through the village of Pinhoe and set my steps rather wearily toward Exeter. I had conceived the idea, some time before, of walking from London to Torquay, and my chief concern at the moment was to decide whether or not I could cover the intervening five miles and reach the Half Moon Hotel in High Street before the impending storm broke.

I had left Pinhoe perhaps half a mile to the rear, when the strong southwest gale whipped into my face some drops of cold, stinging rain. As I hesitated, uncertain whether to go forward in the face of the gale or to beat a hasty retreat to the village, I heard behind me the sound of an approaching automobile.

It slowed up, and a voice inquired whether I could point out the way to Major Temple's place. I glanced up and saw a tall, heavily built man of perhaps some forty years of age, bronzed and rugged, with the mark of the traveler upon him, and although his face at first impressed me unpleasantly, the impression was dispelled in part at least by his peculiarly attractive smile. I informed him that I was myself a comparative stranger to that part of England. He then asked if I were going toward Exeter and, on my affirmative reply, at once invited me to get into the car, as he could carry me at least the major part of my way.

He was a good looking fellow, of a sort, with a somewhat sensuous face, and I felt certain that his short, stubby, black mustache concealed a rather cruel mouth. Evidently a man to gain his ends, I thought, without being over nice about the means he employed.

Presently he turned to me. "I understand," he said, "that Major Temple's place is upon the main road, about half a mile this side of Exeter. There is a gray stone gateway, and a lodge. I shall try the first entrance answering that description."

I suggested that I should leave the car as soon as we reached the gateway in question and continue upon foot the balance of my way. My companion nodded and we rode in silence for a few moments. Suddenly, with a great swirl of dead leaves and a squall of cold rain, the storm broke upon us, and a moment later we turned without stopping into a handsome gray stone gateway and up a long, straight gravel road bordered on each side by a row of beautiful oaks. I glanced up in some surprise, but he only smiled and nodded, so I said no more, realizing that he could hardly set me down in the face of such a storm.

A quarter of a mile, through a fine park, and a swift turn brought us up under the porte-cochère of a large gray stone house of a peculiar and to me somewhat gloomy and unattractive appearance. The rain and wind were now so bad that I saw it would be useless to attempt to proceed against it, and after a short wait the door was thrown open by a servant and we hurriedly entered.

* * *

WE FOUND ourselves in a large, dimly lighted hallway. I inspected with considerable curiosity the man who had admitted us, not only because of his Oriental appearance—he was a Chinaman of the better sort—but also because he was dressed in his native garb. He, upon his part, showed not the slightest interest in our coming, as he inspected us with his childlike, sleepy eyes.

"Tell Major Temple," said my friend, "that Mr. Robert Ashton is here, and—" he turned to me with a questioning glance—

"Owen Morgan," I replied, wondering if he would know me by name. If he did, he showed no sign.

"Just so—Mr. Owen Morgan," he continued, then strode toward a log fire which crackled and sputtered cheerily upon the hearth of a huge stone fire-place.

"I'm afraid I'm rather presuming upon the situation," I suggested when I had joined him, "but perhaps the storm will slacken up presently."

"Major Temple will be glad to see you, I'm sure," rejoined Mr. Ashton unconcernedly. "You can't possibly go on, you know."

"I'm afraid not," I answered, a bit ungraciously.

"The Major is a queer old character," Mr. Ashton remarked. "Great traveler and collector. I'm here on a matter of business myself—partly, at least. He'll be glad to meet you. I fancy he's a bit lonely with nobody to keep him company but his daughter. Here he comes now."

He turned toward a tall spare man with gray hair and drooping gray mustaches. His face, like Ashton's, had the dull burnt-in tone of brown which is acquired only by long exposure to the sun and which usually marks its possessor as a traveler in the hot countries.

"Ah, Ashton," exclaimed the Major, dropping his monocle, "delighted to see you. You arrived yesterday?"

"Late yesterday; you see I lost no time in coming to report the result of my quest."

"And you were successful?" demanded the older man excitedly.

"Entirely so," replied Ashton with a smile of satisfaction.

"Good! Good!" The Major rubbed his hands and smiled, then, apparently observing me for the first time, glanced at Mr. Ashton with a slight frown and an interrogative expression.

"Mr. Owen Morgan," said Ashton lightly, "on his way to Exeter with me. I took the liberty of bringing him in, on account of the storm."

"I am ready to go on at once," I interjected stiffly, "as soon as the rain lets up a bit."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" The Major's voice was somewhat testy. "You can't possibly proceed on a night like this. Make yourself at home, sir. Any friend of Mr. Ashton's is welcome here." He turned to one of the servants, who had entered the room to turn on the lights. "Show Mr. Ashton and Mr. Morgan to their rooms, Gibson. You'll be wanting to fix up a bit before dinner," he announced.

"Which rooms, sir, shall I show the gentlemen to?" asked the man, a trifle uneasily, I thought.

The Major looked at Ashton and laughed. "Ashton," he said, "you know I took this place only a short time ago on my return from my last trip to the East and, as we do not have many visitors, it's a bit musty and out of shape. Queer old house, I fancy. Supposed to be haunted or something of the sort. I imagine it won't worry *you* much."

"Hardly," replied my companion. "I've outgrown ghosts. Lead on to the haunted chamber."

The Major turned to the servant. "Show the gentlemen to the two rooms in the west wing, Gibson—the green room will suit Mr. Ashton, I fancy, and perhaps Mr. Morgan will find the white-and-gold room across the hall comfortable for the night."

I found my room a large and fairly comfortable one, and busied myself in making such preparations for dinner as I could with the few requisites my small knapsack contained.

AFTER a considerable time I heard the musical notes of a Chinese gong and, making my way to the staircase, I saw Ashton just joining a strikingly beautiful and distinguished looking girl of perhaps twenty-two or -three, dressed in an evening gown of white, the very simplicity of which only served to accentuate the splendid lines of her figure. With her splendid eyes and wide brow, crowned with a mass of bronze-colored hair, I felt that even my critical artistic taste could with difficulty find a flaw. It was evident that she and Mr. Ashton knew each other well, yet it seemed to me that Miss Temple did not respond with much cordiality to his effusive greeting.

As I joined them, Major Temple presented me as a friend of Mr. Ashton's, which, it appeared to me, did not predispose that young lady particularly in my favor.

CHAPTER II

AN APPEAL FOR HELP

DURING dinner the two men talked continually of China, and referred frequently to "it," and to "the stone." I attempted to carry on a conversation with Miss Temple, but she seemed laboring under intense excitement and unable to give my efforts any real attention. As near as I could gather, Ashton had set out from Hong Kong some months before on a search for a certain stone or jewel which Major Temple desired for his collection, and after an adventurous trip, during which he had been forced at the risk of his life to remain disguised as a coolie for some weeks, had finally escaped and returned to England.

There was also some talk of a reward, which seemed to give Mr. Ashton great satisfaction and to cause Major Temple much uneasiness, for I saw him glance frequently at the blanched face of his daughter.

As Mr. Ashton brought his thrilling story to a conclusion he drew from his waistcoat pocket a small, green, leather case, evidently of Chinese workmanship, and turned out upon the white cloth a miniature representation of the god Buddha, above an inch and a half in height and wonderfully cut from a single flawless emerald!

As the wonderful, sparkling gem flashed across the white cloth in the direction of Miss Temple an expression of intense horror passed over her face as she caught the burning eyes of Mr. Ashton fixed upon hers. She returned his gaze defiantly for a moment, then lowered her eyes and composed her features behind the cold and impassive mask she had worn throughout the evening.

Ashton flushed a sullen red, then picked up the jewel and set it carelessly upon the top of a cut-glass salt-cellar and I was startled to see the wooden, impassive face of the Chinese servant light up with a glare of sudden anger and alarm as he caught sight of the jewel. Major Temple, observing him at the same moment, quickly covered the figure with his hand, and the Chinaman, resuming almost instantly his customary look of childlike unconcern, proceeded to offer us cigars and cigarettes as Miss Temple rose and left the table. I excused myself, feeling superfluous, and strolled into the great hall, where I stood with my back to the welcome fire, listening to the howling of the storm without.

Perhaps fifteen minutes later Miss Temple came quickly into the hall, the beauty of her delicate, mobile face marred by evident mental suffering.

"You are a friend of Mr. Ashton's," she said, as she came up to me. "Have you known him long?"

"Miss Temple, I am afraid I can hardly claim to be a friend of Mr. Ashton's. I never met him before this afternoon."

"But I thought you came with him?" she said.

I explained my presence, and mentioned my work.

"Then you are Owen Morgan, the illustrator!" she cried. "I know your work very well, and I am delighted to meet you. I was afraid you, too, were in the conspiracy." Her face darkened again.

"The conspiracy?" I asked, much mystified.

Miss Temple looked apprehensively toward the door, then her eyes sought mine. "I am all alone here, Mr. Morgan," she said at last, "and I need a friend very badly. I wonder if I can depend upon you—trust you?"

I was surprised, but assured her I should be only too happy to serve her in any way.

"But what is it that you fear?" I inquired.

"My father," she said hurriedly, at the same time lowering her voice, "is a madman on the subject of jewels. He would give anything—anything to possess some curio upon which he had set his desires! Last year, in China, he saw by accident the emerald you have just seen. It was the sacred relic of a Buddhist temple in Ping Yang, and is said to have come from the holy city of Lhasa in Thibet. His offers to purchase it were laughed at, and when he persisted he was forced to leave the city to avoid trouble.

"In Hong Kong he made the acquaintance of this man Ashton, a sort of agent and collector. Mr. Ashton persecuted me with his attentions in spite of my repeated refusals to marry him. Imagine my amazement, then, when my father, on our arrival in England, told me that he had commissioned Mr. Ashton to obtain the Emerald Buddha for him, and had agreed, in the event of his success, to give him my hand in marriage!

"My prayers, my appeals, were all equally useless; he informed me that Mr. Ashton was a gentleman—that he had given him his word and could not break it. I was forced into a semi-acquiescence to the arrangement, believing that Mr. Ashton could never succeed in his mad attempt, when suddenly my father received word that Mr. Ashton had arrived at Southampton yesterday. I shall never marry Robert Ashton—never! I do not know what my father will ask of me, but if he asks *that*, I shall leave this house to-morrow, and I beg that you will take me with you, until I can find some occupation that will enable me to support myself!"

Her story filled me with the deepest astonishment. I thrust out my hand and grasped hers. "You can depend upon me absolutely!" I exclaimed. "My mother is at Torquay. She will be glad to welcome you, Miss Temple."

"Thank you, thank you!" she cried in her deep, earnest voice. "Do not leave in the morning until I have seen you. Good-night."

At the stairway she threw back a smile of such sweet gratitude and relief that I felt amply repaid for my promise.

SUDDENLY my attention was attracted by the sound of loud voices coming from the direction of the dining-room, as though Major Temple and his guest were engaged in a violent quarrel. Then Mr. Ashton burst into the hall, followed by Major Temple, both of them excited and angry.

"I hold you to your contract!" the former shouted. "By ——, you'll live up to it, or I'll know the reason why!"

"I'll pay, —— it, I'll pay!" cried Major Temple angrily. "But not a penny to boot!"

Ashton turned and faced him. "Don't you realize that that emerald is worth a hundred thousand pounds? You promised me your daughter, but you've got to pay me for the stone in addition!"

"Not a penny!" cried Major Temple.

"Then I'll take it to London and let Crothers have it!"

"Come now, Ashton, what did the stone cost you? Merely the cost of the trip, wasn't it? I'll pay that, if you like."

"And I risked my life a dozen times to get you the jewel! You must be mad! Fifty thousand pounds, and not a penny less!"

"It's mine—I told you of it! Without my help you could have done nothing. I demand it. It is my property. You were acting only as my agent. Give it to me!" Major Temple was beside himself with excitement.

"I'll see you —— first," cried Ashton, now thoroughly angry.

The Major glared at him, pale with fury. "I'll never let you leave the house with it!" he cried.

By this time my repeated coughing and shuffling of my feet had attracted their attention, and they both hastened to conceal their anger.

CHAPTER III

A CRY IN THE MORNING

IT SEEMED to me that I was disturbed, during the night, by the sound of voices without my door and the movements of people in the hallway, but I presume it was merely a dream. Just before daybreak, however, I got up to close one of the windows, when I heard from the room across the hall, the one occupied by Mr. Ashton, a sudden and terrible cry as of some one in mortal agony, followed by the sound of a heavy body falling upon the floor. I also fancied I heard the quick closing of a door or window, but of this I could not be sure.

I hastily threw on some clothes and ran into the hall, calling loudly for help. Opposite me was the door of Mr. Ashton's room; I found it locked. Presently Major Temple came running through the hallway, followed by his daughter and several of the servants. Miss Temple had thrown on a long silk Chinese wrapper and I could not help observing the ghastly pallor of her face.

"What's wrong here?" cried Major Temple excitedly.

"I do not know, sir," I replied. "I heard a cry from Mr. Ashton's room, but I find his door locked."

"Break it in!" cried Major Temple.

After several attempts the fastening gave way and we were precipitated headlong into the room. The gruesome sight before us caused both Major Temple and myself to recoil sharply toward the doorway. Upon the floor lay Robert Ashton in his night-clothes, his head in a pool of blood, his hands outstretched before him, his face ghastly with terror!

The Major at once ordered the servants to keep out of the room, then turned to his daughter and in a low voice requested her to retire. She did so at once, in a state of terrible excitement. He then closed the door behind us, lighting the gas, and we proceeded to examine the body. Ashton was dead, although death had apparently occurred but a short time before. In the top of his head we found a deep circular wound apparently made by some heavy, sharp-pointed instrument, but there were no other marks of violence. I examined the wound in the head carefully, but could not imagine any weapon which would have left such a mark.

And then the wonder of the situation began to dawn upon me. All three windows were securely fastened with heavy bolts on the inside. There was absolutely no other means of entrance except the door, and a rapid examination of its broken fastenings showed it had been bolted upon the inside. Major Temple was engaged in searching Mr. Ashton's Gladstone bag, heedless of the grim and silent figure upon the floor beside him, and, when he had concluded, bent over the prostrate form of the dead man and began a hurried search of his person and the surrounding floor. "The police must never find it!" I heard him mutter. Then with a sudden cry he dashed at a table on which lay the small green leather case from which Ashton had produced the emerald at dinner the night before. The case was empty. "It's gone!" he fairly screamed. "My ——, it's gone!"

"Impossible," I said. "No one could have entered or left this room since Mr. Ashton came into it."

"Nonsense!" Major Temple snorted angrily. "Do you suppose Ashton smashed in his own skull by way of amusement?" He turned to the bed and began to search it closely, removing the pillows, feeling beneath the mattresses, even taking the candle and examining the floor foot by foot. Once more he went over the contents of the portmanteau, then again examined the clothing of the dead man, but all to no purpose. The Emerald Buddha was as clearly and evidently gone as though it had vanished into the surrounding ether.

THERE was clearly no possibility that Ashton had inflicted this wound upon himself, yet the supposition that some one had entered the room from without seemed nullified by the bolted door and windows.

The body lay, its head toward the window in the west wall of the room, and some six or eight feet away, and an even greater distance from the walls on either side. There was no piece of furniture, no heavy object, anywhere near at hand. I looked again at the queer, round, conical hole in the top of the dead man's head. It had evidently been delivered from above. I glanced up, and saw only the dim, unbroken expanse of the ceiling above me papered in white. I turned to Major Temple, who stood staring with protruding eyes at something upon the floor near one of the windows. "What do you make of that?" he asked in a startled voice, handing me what appeared to be a small piece of tough Chinese paper. Upon it was inscribed, in black, a single Chinese letter.

"It is the symbol of the god," he said, "the Buddha! The same sign was engraved upon the base of the emerald figure, and I saw it in the temple at Ping Yang! What is it doing here?" Then his face lit up with a sudden idea. He rushed to the door and opened it. "Gibson!" he called to his man without. "Find Li Min and bring him here at once! Don't let him out of your sight for a moment!"

The man was gone ten minutes or more, during which time Major Temple walked excitedly up and down the room, muttering continually something about the police. "They must be notified," I said, at last. He turned to me with a queer, half frightened look. "They can do no good, no good, whatever!" he cried. "This is the work of one of the Chinese secret societies. They are the cleverest criminals in the world. I have lived among them, and I know."

"Even the cleverest criminals in the world couldn't bolt a door or window from the outside," I said.

"Do not be too sure of that. I have known them to do things equally strange. This fellow Li Min I brought from China with me—one of the most faithful servants I have ever known. He is not of the peasant or coolie class. He represented to me that he was suspected of belonging to the Reform Association, and was obliged to leave the country to save his head. I do not know—I do not know—possibly he may have been sent to watch—they knew in Ping Yang that I was after the Emerald Buddha. Who knows? They are an amazing people, an amazing people! Did you hear any footsteps or other noises in the hallway during the night?"

I told him I could not be sure. At this moment Gibson returned with a scared look on his face. Li Min had disappeared. No one had seen him since the night before. His room had apparently been occupied, but the Chinaman was nowhere to be found.

"The police must be notified at once," I urged.

"I will attend to it," said the Major. "First we must have some coffee." He closed the door of the room carefully and, taking the key from the lock—it had evidently not been used by Mr. Ashton the night before—locked the door from the outside and ordered Gibson to remain in the hallway without and allow no one to approach.

We finished dressing and then had a hurried breakfast. I suggested that I drive into Exeter with one of his men, notify the police and at the same time get my luggage. The murder and the necessity of my appearing as a witness at the inquest made it imperative that I remain upon the scene until the police were satisfied. At my mention of the police the Major showed great uneasiness, as before. "You need not say anything about the—the emerald," he said slowly. "It will only create unnecessary talk and trouble."

"I'm afraid I must," I replied. "It is evidently the sole motive for the murder."

He shook his head slowly. "What a pity!" he remarked. "What a pity! If the stone is ever found now, the authorities will hold it as the property of the dead man or his relations, if indeed he has any. And it would have been the crowning glory of my collection! But they will never find it, never!" he concluded with a cunning smile.

I wondered whether Major Temple knew more than appeared on the surface, but recollected his excited search of the dead man's belongings.

HOWEVER, during my short drive to Exeter, the thought came to me that if Major Temple could in any way have caused the death of Robert Ashton from without the room, his first act after entering it would naturally have been to search for the emerald. I regretted that I had not examined the floor of the attic above, to determine whether any carefully fitted trap-door or hidden chimney or other opening to the interior of the room below existed; also the walls, and the ground outside.

At police headquarters I explained the case hurriedly, omitting all details except those pertaining directly to Mr. Ashton's death. The Chief Constable sent one of his men into an inner room, who returned in a moment with a small, keen-looking, ferret-faced man of some forty-eight or fifty years, with gray hair, sharp gray eyes, and a smooth-shaven face. He introduced him to me as Sergeant McQuade, of Scotland Yard, who, it seems, happened to be in the city upon some counterfeiting case or other, and suggested that he accompany me back to the house.

We had scarcely left the limits of the town behind us, when I noticed a figure in blue, plodding slowly along the muddy road ahead of us, in the same direction as ourselves, and Jones, the groom, said, as we drew alongside, that it was Li Min, whose sudden disappearance had caused so much excitement. The Chinaman looked at us with a blandly innocent face and, nodding pleasantly, bade us good morning. I stopped the cart and ordered Jones to get down and accompany him back to the house and on no account to let him out of his sight.

As we drove on I explained all the circumstances of the case in detail to Sergeant McQuade. In some excitement, he requested me to return with him to Exeter at once. I did not inquire into his reasons for this step, but complied, the Sergeant meanwhile plying me with questions. I decided he had concluded that Li Min had committed the murder and hurried off to place the Emerald Buddha in the hands of some of his countrymen in the town and arrange an alibi. This he admitted. "It is absolutely necessary that we prevent any Chinaman from leaving the town until this matter is cleared up, and there is a train to London at eight. It is now ten minutes of nine. I am sorry you did not notify the police at once."

I made no reply, not wishing to prejudice him against Major Temple.

At Exeter we got little satisfaction. "Two of them went up on the eight o'clock train," the detective growled. "One of them keeps a laundry in Frog Street. The other was a stranger. They took tickets for London, third class."

When we arrived at The Oaks, as Major Temple's place was called, Jones and Li Min had arrived, and the Major had subjected the latter, he informed us, to a severe cross-examination. The Chinaman had denied all knowledge of Mr. Ashton's death and explained his own absence by saying that he had gone into town to see his brother, recently arrived from China, and knowing the habit of the Temples to breakfast very late, had supposed his return at nine o'clock would pass unnoticed. I made Major Temple acquainted with Sergeant McQuade and we proceeded at once to the room where lay all that now remained of the unfortunate Robert Ashton.

CHAPTER IV

A QUEER DISCOVERY

WE FOUND Gibson guarding the door where we had left him. Miss Temple was nowhere to be seen. Major Temple took the key from his pocket and, throwing open the room, allowed McQuade and myself to enter, he following us and closing the door behind him.

McQuade examined everything carefully —key, lock, bolt, socket, wound, windows, outside view. Then he stooped suddenly, picked up a small white object, a bit of lace, I thought, and handed it to Major Temple. "What do you make of that?" he asked.

Major Temple took the thing and spread it out; it was a woman's handkerchief. He became deathly pale, and his hand shook violently. I saw the initials M. T. in one corner and noticed a strong and most peculiar odor of perfume, some curious oriental scent that rose from the handkerchief. McQuade gazed at us, curiously intent. "Do you recognize it?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Major Temple, recovering himself with an effort. "It is my daughter's!"

"How do you explain its presence here?" asked the detective.

"I do not attempt to do so, any more than I can undertake to explain any of the other strange events connected with this horrible affair," said the Major pathetically. He seemed to me to have aged perceptibly since the evening before—he looked broken, old.

McQuade took the handkerchief and continued his examination of the room. I felt ready to swear that the handkerchief had not been upon the floor during my previous examination of the room, yet how could its presence there now be explained, with the door locked, the key in Major Temple's pocket, and Gibson on guard in the hall? I thought of Muriel Temple, young, beautiful, innocent in every outward appearance, yet remembered her aversion for Ashton, and her determination never to marry him under any circumstances. Believing thoroughly in the innocence of Miss Temple, I resolved to do all in my power to sift the affair to the bottom.

My thoughts were interrupted by Sergeant McQuade, who, having brought his examination to a sudden close, announced to Major Temple that the police and the divisional surgeon would arrive shortly, and that meanwhile he would have a look at the grounds beneath the windows of the room. I decided to accompany him, but suggested to the Major that it might be well to show Sergeant McQuade the scrap of paper, containing the single Chinese character, which we had found upon the floor. Major Temple took it from his pocket and handed it to the detective without a word. I could see that the latter was puzzled. "What does it mean?" he inquired. "Do you know?" He turned to Major Temple.

"Only that it is a religious symbol used by the Buddhist priests in China," said the latter. "It is found in their temples, and is supposed to ward off evil influences."

"Is there any reason to suppose that it belonged to Li Min or any of his countrymen? Might it not have belonged to the dead man himself—a copy, perhaps? A curiosity which he might have desired to preserve?"

I had told him nothing of the relations between Miss Temple and Ashton, but it was evident that the finding of her handkerchief in the murdered man's room had started him off on another tack.

"None whatever," the Major responded. "Yet the recovery of the jewel was beyond question the reason for the murder, and but four persons knew of the presence of the jewel in this house—my daughter, Mr. Morgan, Li Min, and myself."

"How did Li Min come to know of it?"

"He saw us examining it at dinner last night, while waiting on the table."

"Was the stone of such value that its recovery would have been sought at so great a cost?"

"Intrinsically it was worth perhaps a hundred thousand pounds. As a curio, or as an object of religious veneration among the Buddhist priests and their followers, it was priceless!"

"A hundred thousand pounds!" exclaimed McQuade. "And you intended to buy it from Mr. Ashton?"

"Yes," the Major stammered, "yes, I did."

"At what price?" came the question, cold and incisive.

"I—I—Mr. Ashton secured the jewel for me as my agent."

"But surely you were to give him some commission, some reward? What was that reward, Major Temple?"

"I had promised him the hand of my daughter in marriage."

"And was he satisfied with that settlement?" continued the detective ruthlessly.

"We had a slight disagreement—he—he wanted a cash payment in addition."

"Which you refused?"

"The matter had not been settled."

"And how did your daughter regard the bargain?" asked McQuade, coldly.

Major Temple drew himself up stiffly. "I fail to see the purpose of these questions," he said with some heat. "My daughter was ready to meet my wishes, Sergeant McQuade. Mr. Ashton was a gentleman and was much attached to her."

As we passed out, the detective ordered the door locked and put the key in his pocket. I asked to accompany him in his explorations outside, to which he readily assented, and with a parting injunction that Li Min be not allowed to leave the house, we passed out into the garden.

THE storm had stopped some time during the night, and as the tragedy had occurred later and not long before daybreak, there was every reason to believe that traces of any one approaching the windows of Mr. Ashton's room would be clearly visible and that any traces made before or during the rain must have been completely obliterated. There were no evidences of any one's having walked upon the pathway since the rain, nor was it apparent that any one could have gained access to the windows without the aid of a ladder, which must have left its tell-tale marks behind.

At the end of the wing conditions were more favorable. A covered porch encircled the end of the building and extended along its front. There were three windows in the west face of the wing—one in the room which I had occupied, one in the end of the hallway, and one in Mr. Ashton's room. The roof of the porch was directly beneath them. Any one inside the house could have reached the porch roof from the window at the end of the hall and gained the window of Mr. Ashton's room. I thought of the handkerchief, of the footsteps I fancied I had heard during the night, and shuddered.

Presently the Sergeant stepped toward

the front of the house. There in the soft gravel were the prints of a woman's feet, leading from the corner of the path to the front entrance. I bent down and examined them with curious eyes, then recoiled with a cry of dismay. The footprints lead in one direction only, and that was toward the front door!

In a flash I realized what theory McQuade would at once construct in his mind: The murderer, reaching the porch roof from the hallway and obtaining access to the murdered man's room through the window, would, upon escaping from the room to the roof, be unable to enter the house again from the roof because of my presence in the hall and that of the others who had appeared in answer to my cries. What more natural than to descend from the porch by means of the heavy vines at the corner, walk quickly along the path a few steps, reenter the house through the front door, and appear almost at once among the others? I remembered that Miss Temple had appeared in a loose dressing-gown. Would she then have had time to throw off her dress so quickly, wet and muddy as it must have been, and to change her shoes for slippers? Where were these shoes? Would their condition prove that she had been out of the house during the night?

I saw McQuade examining the heavy mass of ivy at the corner of the porch. The vine was not broken or torn in any way as would inevitably have been the case had any one used it as a means of descent. But I observed, though I felt sure McQuade did not, a lightning-rod from the roof of the wing down to the porch roof, across it, and thence to the ground. Had any one descended in this way, he would have walked along the border between the porch and the path to the corner. Here he would have been obliged to step on to the gravel. Footsteps upon the grass would have left no mark.

I DID not call McQuade's attention to this at the time. He strode along the path to the steps leading to the large front porch, tracing the muddy footprints to the porch and upon its floor, where they became no longer perceptible. He then entered the house and at once made for the upper hall in the west wing. His first move was to examine the window at the end of the hall, which, I was not surprised to find, was unfastened. His second was to step out upon the roof. No sooner had I joined him here then he crossed to the window of the green room and peered in. The interior of the room was clearly visible, but the window was tightly bolted within.

The Sergeant looked distinctly disappointed. Then, with a low whistle, he pointed to a mark upon the white window-sill which had escaped both his and my attention. It was the faint print of a hand—a bloody hand—small and delicate in structure. Yet it pointed, not outward from the room, as though made by some one leaving it, but inward, as by a person standing on the roof and resting his or her hand upon the window-sill while attempting to open the window!

"What do you make of that, sir?" inquired the detective.

"No one would get *out* of a window *that* way."

"Except a woman," said McQuade dryly. "A man would swing his legs over the sill and drop to the roof. It's barely three feet. But a woman would sit upon the sill, turn on her stomach, rest her hands on the sill with her fingers pointing *toward* the room, and slide gently down until her feet touched the roof beneath."

"The whole thing is impossible," I retorted, with some heat. "There's no sense in talking about how any one may or may not have got out of the room, when the bolted window proves that no one got either in or out at all."

"Perhaps you think that poor devil in there killed himself?" said the detective grimly. "The window was bolted *after* the murder!"

"By the murdered man, I suppose," I retorted ironically.

"Not necessarily," he replied coldly, "but possibly by some one who desired to shield the murderer." He looked at me squarely, but I was able to meet his gaze without any misgivings.

"I was the first person who entered the room," I said earnestly, "and I am prepared to make oath that the window was bolted when I entered."

"Was the room dark?" he inquired.

"It was." I answered, not perceiving the drift of his remarks.

"Did you examine the windows at once?"

"No."

"What did you do?"

"I knelt down and examined the body."

"What was Major Temple doing?"

"I—I did not notice. I think he began to examine the things in Mr. Ashton's portmanteau."

"Then, Mr. Morgan, if, occupied as you were, you did not notice Major Temple's movements, I fail to see how you can swear as to the window at the time you entered the room."

"Your suggestion is impossible, Sergeant McQuade. Had Major Temple bolted the window I should certainly have noticed it."

The Sergeant smiled slightly.

CHAPTER V

A WOMAN IN THE NET

WE DESCENDED to the library, where Major Temple sat waiting. "Well, Mr. Morgan?" he inquired excitedly.

"Mr. McQuade can perhaps tell you," I replied.

"I can tell you more, Major Temple," said the detective gravely, "if you will first let me have a few words with Miss Temple."

"With my daughter?" exclaimed the Major, evidently much surprised.

"Yes. And if you do not mind, Major Temple, I should much prefer to have you send one of the servants for her. I have a particular reason for desiring you to remain here."

I thought at first that Major Temple was going to resent this, but although he flushed hotly, he strode to a call-bell and pressed it, then:

"I think you would do better to question Li Min."

"I do not intend to omit doing that," replied McQuade.

We remained in uneasy silence until the maid returned with Miss Temple who, dismissing her at the door, faced us with a look upon her face of unfeigned surprise, pale and greatly agitated. I felt that she had not slept, and the dark circles under her eyes confirmed my belief. "You sent for me, father?" she inquired nervously.

"Sergeant McQuade here"—he indicated the detective whom Miss Temple recognized by a slight inclination of her head—"wishes to ask you a few questions."

"Me?" Her voice had in it a note of alarm which was not lost upon the man from Scotland Yard.

"I think you may be able to clear up a few points that at present I can not quite understand."

"I'm afraid I can not help you much," she said gravely.

"Possibly more than you think, miss. I understand your father had promised your hand in marriage to Mr. Ashton."

Miss Temple favored me with a quick and bitter glance. I knew that she felt this information had come from me.

"Yes?" She replied. "That is true."

"Did you desire to marry him?"

The girl looked at her father in evident uncertainty.

"I—I—Why should I answer such a question?" She turned to the detective with scornful eyes. "It is purely my own affair, and of no consequence—now."

"That is true, miss," replied the Sergeant, with deeper gravity. "Still, I do not see that the truth can do any one any harm."

Miss Temple flushed and hesitated a moment, then: "I would rather have died than have married him!"

McQuade had made her lose her temper, for which I inwardly hated him. His next question left her cold with fear.

"When did you last see Mr. Ashton alive?" he demanded.

The girl hesitated, turned suddenly pale, then threw back her head with a look of proud determination. "I refuse to answer that question!" she said defiantly.

Her father had been regarding her with amazed surprise. "Muriel," he said in a trembling voice, "what do you mean? You left Mr. Ashton and myself in the dining-room at a little after nine."

She made no reply.

Sergeant McQuade slowly took from his pocket the handkerchief he had found in Mr. Ashton's room. "Is this yours, miss?"

Miss Temple took it, mechanically. "Yes," she said.

"It was found beside the murdered man's body," said the detective.

For a moment I thought Miss Temple was going to faint, and I instinctively moved toward her. She recovered herself at once. "Is it possible you suppose *I* had anything to do with Mr. Ashton's death?"

"I have not said so, miss. This handkerchief was found in Mr. Ashton's room. It is possible that he had it himself, as a souvenir of some former meeting, although in that case it would hardly have retained this strong scent of perfume. But you might have dropped it at table—he may have picked it up that very night. I desire only the truth, Miss Temple. Tell us, if you can, how the handkerchief came in Mr. Ashton's room."

I saw Miss Temple's face change. I waited anxiously for the next words.

"I last saw Mr. Ashton," she answered, with a faint blush, "last night about midnight!"

HER answer was as much of a surprise to me as it evidently was to both Major Temple and the detective.

"Muriel!" cried the former.

"I went to his room immediately after he retired," continued Miss Temple, with evident effort. "I wished to tell him something—something important, before the morning, when it might have been too late. I was afraid to stand in the hallway and talk to him through the open door for fear I should be seen. I went inside. I must have dropped the handkerchief at that time."

"Will you tell us what you wished to say to Mr. Ashton that you regarded as so important as to take you to his room at midnight?"

Again Miss Temple hesitated, then evidently decided to tell all. "I went to tell him," she said gravely, "that no matter what my father might promise him, I would refuse to marry him under any circumstances. I told him that if he turned over the emerald to my father under any such promise, he would do so at his own risk. I begged him to release me from the engagement which my father had made, and to give me back a letter in which, at my father's demand, I had in a moment of weakness consented to it."

"And he refused?" asked the detective.

"He refused." Miss Temple bowed her head and I saw from the tears in her eyes that her endurance and spirit under this cross-questioning were fast deserting her.

"Then what did you do?"

"I went back to my room."

"Did you retire?"

"No."

"Did you remove your clothing?"

"I did not. I threw myself upon the bed until——" She hesitated, and I suddenly saw the snare into which she had been led.

"Until what?" he asked bluntly.

"Until—this morning," she concluded, and I instinctively felt that she was not telling the truth.

"Until you heard the commotion in the hall?" inquired McQuade insinuatingly.

"Yes," she answered.

"Then, Miss Temple, how do you explain the fact that you appeared immediately in the hall as soon as the house was aroused, in your slippers and a dressing-gown?"

She saw that she had been trapped. "I had begun to change," she said nervously.

"Were you out of the house this morning, Miss Temple, at or about the time of the murder? Were you at the corner of the porch under Mr. Ashton's room?" The detective's manner was brutal in its cruel insistence.

Miss Temple gasped faintly. "I—I refuse to answer any more questions!" she cried, and, sobbing violently, turned and left the room.

McQuade strode quickly toward Major Temple, who had observed the scene in amazed and horrified silence. "Major Temple," he said sternly, "I must ask to go at once to Miss Temple's room!"

"To her room? Sir," thundered the Major, "do you mean to imply that my daughter had any hand in this business? By —— sir, I warn you——" He towered over the detective, his face flushed, his clenched fist raised in anger.

McQuade held up his hand. "Major Temple, the truth can harm no one who is innocent. Miss Temple has not been entirely frank. I must search her room at once!" With a growl of suppressed rage the girl's father led the way to her room. The detective went to a large closet between the dressing-room and bedroom, threw it open, and drew forth a pair of boots, damp and covered with mud, and a brown tweed walking-skirt, the lower edge of which was still damp and mud-stained. "Major Temple," he said, "your daughter left the house, in these shoes and this skirt, some time close to daybreak. The murder occurred about that time. If you will induce her to tell why she did so, and why she seems so anxious to conceal the fact, it will naturally assist us in aiming at the truth!"

As he concluded, sounds below announced the arrival of the police and the divisional surgeon, and with a curt nod he left us and descended to the hall.

CHAPTER VI

I ADVISE MISS TEMPLE

AS I DID not suppose that I should be wanted, I left the house and started out across the beautiful lawns. I met Miss Temple coming along the porch, evidently prepared for a walk, so I suggested, rather awkwardly, remembering her look of annoyance during the examination, that I should be happy to accompany her. Somewhat to my surprise she accepted my offer at once, and we started briskly off.

She was silent all the way down to the entrance to the grounds, but as we set out along the main road she said with surprising suddenness: "Do *you* believe, Mr. Morgan, that I had any part in this terrible affair?"

"Certainly not," I said. "And if you will permit me to say so, Miss Temple, I think you would have been wiser had you been entirely frank with him."

"What do you mean?" she asked indignantly.

I felt disappointed somehow, at her manner. "Miss Temple," I said gently, "I am sorry you were not frank about your leaving the house, as he believes you did, early this morning."

"Why does he believe that?" she asked spiritedly.

"Because he found the footprints of a woman's shoe in the gravel walk, from the west corner of the porch to the main entrance. They lead only one way. He found the skirt and shoes you wore, wet and covered with mud. The footprints were made after the rain, or they would have been washed away and obliterated by it."

"The brute!" said Miss Temple indignantly. "To enter my rooms! But suppose I did go outside at that time—suppose I had decided to run away from the wretched conspiracy against my happiness? I came back, did I not?"

"Why," I inquired, "did you come back?" She glanced quickly at me, with a look of fear. "I—I—that I refuse to explain to any one!"

"You will remember, Miss Temple, that the footprints lead in one direction only and that was *toward* the house. Mr. McQuade does not believe you left the house in the same way you returned to it."

"What on earth *does* he believe, then?" she inquired with a slight laugh, which was the first sign of brightness I had seen in her since the night before. I could not help admiring her beautiful mouth and her white, even teeth as she turned inquiringly to me. Yet my answer was such as to drive that smile from her face for a long time to come.

"That whoever committed the murder reached the porch roof by means of the window at the end of the upper hall, and after entering and leaving Mr. Ashton's room, descended in some way from the porch to the pathway, and reentered the house by the main entrance. Your footsteps are the only ones so far that fit in with this theory."

"IT IS ABSURD!" said my companion, with a look of terror. "How could the window have been rebolted? Why should the murderer not have reentered the house in the same way he left it? How does he know that there was any one upon the roof at all?"

"He claims that some one interested in the murderer's welfare might have rebolted the window upon entering the room. That would mean either your father or myself. Whoever committed the crime feared to enter the hall by the window after the house had been aroused. There is positive evidence of some one's having been upon the roof."

"What evidence?" Her clenched hands and rapid breathing indicated some intense inward emotion.

"The faint print of a hand—in blood, upon the window-sill. Miss Temple, you will, I'm sure, see the advisability of explaining fully, in order that the investigations may be turned in other directions, where the guilt lies, instead of in yours, where I am sure it does not."

She seemed suddenly stricken with terror. "I can say nothing, nothing whatever!" she answered pathetically, her face a picture of anguish.

I felt alarmed, and indeed greatly disappointed at her manner. Limiting the crime to three people, one of whom must have been upon the porch roof a little before daybreak, I saw at once that suspicion must inevitably fall upon either Miss Temple or her father. Yet there remained one other possibility—the Chinaman, Li Min. His hands, small and delicate, might possibly have made the tell-tale print upon the window-sill, but in that event, why should Miss Temple hesitate to tell of it, had she seen him? The only possible solution filled me with horror—that Miss Temple and Li Min were acting together—that her father, too, was in the plot, as he must have been if he rebolted the window. The thing was clearly impossible, yet otherwise the Chinaman was clearly innocent, for I believed without question that had he entered the room and committed the murder he could in no possible way have bolted the window himself from without. Yet as I looked at the strong, beautiful face of the girl beside me I could not think that, whatever she might be led to do for the sake of some one else, she could never have committed such a crime herself!

I also remembered suddenly Major Temple's angry remark, made to Robert Ashton the night before, that he would never allow Ashton to leave the house with the emerald in his possession. Was she shielding her father? Was it he, then, that she had seen upon the roof?

CHAPTER VII

THE IRON POKER

AS I WENT to my room I met Sergeant McQuade in the hall. The divisional surgeon had returned to the town, the body had been removed to a large, unused billiard-room on the ground floor, and the inquest was set for the following morning at eleven. Also, the two Chinamen who had left Exeter on the morning train had been apprehended in London and were being held there. He proposed to run up to town as soon as the inquest was over. A careful and detailed search of Mr. Ashton's room and belongings had failed to reveal any further light upon the murder or any traces of the missing Emerald Buddha.

After luncheon Sergeant McQuade asked Major Temple to meet him in the library, accompanied by Li Min, and at the Major's request I joined them. The Chinaman was stolidly indifferent and perfectly collected and calm. His right hand was bound up with a strip of white cloth. He spoke English brokenly, but seemed to understand quite well all that was said to him.

"Li Min," said Major Temple, addressing the man, "this gentleman wishes to ask you some questions."

"All light." The Chinaman faced McQuade with a look of bland inquiry.

"Where did you spend last night?"

"Me spend him with blother at Exeter."

"What time did you leave there?"

"P'laps 'leven o'clock, sometime."

"Was it raining?"

"Yes, velly much lain."

"You did not go to bed, then?"

"No, no go to bed; go Exeter."

The Sergeant looked at him sternly. "Your bed was not made this morning. You are lying to me."

"No, no lie. Bed not made flom day before. I make him myself."

The detective turned to Major Temple. "Is this fellow telling the truth?" he asked. "Does he make his own bed?"

"Yes," replied the Major. "The other servants refused to have anything to do with him. They are afraid to enter his room."

"What did you do in Exeter?" asked McQuade.

"P'laps talkee some, smokee some, eatee some—play fan-tan—bimeby sleep."

"What's the matter with your hand?"

"Me cuttee hand, bloken bottle—Exeter."

"What kind of a bottle?"

"Whisky-bottle," answered Li Min, with a childlike smile.

McQuade turned away with a gesture of impatience. "He knows a great deal more than he lets on, but there's no way to get it out of him. Do any of the other servants sleep near him?"

"He sleeps in a small room on the third floor of the east wing, which has a back stairway to the ground floor," said the Major. "The other house servants sleep on the second floor of the rear extension, over the kitchen and pantries. My daughter generally sees to the locking up of the house."

"Did she do so last night?"

"No. I locked the rear entrance before I retired shortly before midnight."

"After Mr. Ashton had left you?"

"Immediately after."

"Then if Li Min had left the house by that time, you would not have known it?"

"No. I sat up with Mr. Ashton until quite late—perhaps for two hours or more after dinner."

"Did you have any quarrel with Mr. Ashton before he left you?"

Major Temple glanced at me with a slight frown. "We had some words," he said, hesitating slightly, "but they were not of any serious consequence. We had a slight disagreement about the price he was to be paid for his services in addition to the other arrangement. We agreed to leave it until the morning."

"You quarreled violently?"

"I—we did not agree," stammered the Major.

"Did Mr. Ashton threaten to take the stone elsewhere?"

"He mentioned something of the sort, I believe."

"To which you objected strongly?"

"I protested, most certainly. I regarded the stone as my property. He acted as my agent only."

McQuade remained silent for some moments, then:

"Major Temple, I shall leave one of my men on the premises. When I return this evening I should like to hear the complete history of this jewel, so that we may the better understand how far the former owners would go in their efforts to recover it."

AFTER McQuade had gone, I suggested to Major Temple that I might remove myself and my belongings to Exeter, but he would not hear of it. I strolled into the town, however, and dispatched a telegram to my mother, in Torquay, advising her that I would be delayed in joining her. On my way back, just after sunset, as I emerged from the wood near a hedge which separated it from the kitchen-gardens of The Oaks I observed two figures standing near a gateway in the hedge, talking together earnestly. Just then they separated and one of them disappeared swiftly into the wood; the other advanced rapidly toward the house and I saw that it was Li Min. The circumstance filled me with vague suspicions.

Instinctively I turned toward the west wing and, as I reached the rear corner of the building, stepped back on the grass, beyond the gravel walk, to obtain a view of the windows above. Suddenly I tripped over an object in the grass and nearly fell. It was a short, thick, iron poker with a heavy octagonal brass knob at one end. As I held it in my hand, I realized at once that with such a weapon as this the strange wound in Ashton's head could readily have been made. But beyond being somewhat stained from lying in the wet grass, it showed no marks of the gruesome use to which I instinctively felt it had been put.

Wrapping it carefully in my handkerchief, I carried it to my room and took the precaution to lock it safely in one of the drawers of the dresser, pending an opportunity to show it privately to Sergeant McQuade upon his return from Exeter.

CHAPTER VIII

MAJOR TEMPLE'S STORY

IN THE dimly lighted library, after dinner, the Major proceeded to tell McQuade and myself his experiences, and those of Robert Ashton, in the pursuit of the Emerald Buddha. He seemed anxious to do this and showed no feeling of animosity toward the man from Scotland Yard.

"I spent almost all of last year," said the Major, "in the interior of China. My daughter and I arrived at Pekin early last Spring, and about a month afterward we began an extensive trip toward the west. We paid good prices for what we bought, had no religious views to promulgate, and by minding our own business strictly, we had no trouble with the natives of any serious moment. I had managed to pick up a few samples of old porcelain and one or two excellent ivories of great age and beauty, but beyond these, the trip had not yielded much in the way of curios for my collection, when in June we reached the city of Ping Yang.

"We found this place peculiarly interesting to us, with a population noticeably different from the inhabitants of the seaport towns, and we remained there perhaps a month. I spent a good deal of time wandering about the town, looking at such examples of old bronzes, embroideries, curious bits of jewelry, and so forth, as I could find in the shops and bazaars, and I frequently had occasion to pass a small Buddhist temple in one of the lower quarters of the town. It was a small one, but notable because a portion of the bone of the little finger of Buddha was said to be preserved among the relics of the shrine. I had frequently observed the priest sunning himself outside its doorway and on several occasions I had dropped some coins into his hand with a salutation which would be equivalent to our English 'Good Luck.'

"One day when I was passing I remarked

to one of my servants, who understood English fairly well, that I was curious to see the interior of the shrine, and he, after a conversation with the temple priest, informed me that there would be no objection to my doing so.

"After the priest had shown me everything in the room with much pride—he seemed a simple and earnest old fellow—I made ready to depart and drew from my pocket a handful of brass coins and thrust them into his outstretched hands. He seemed deeply grateful and said a few words in his native tongue to my servant, who turned to me with the information that the priest was about to accord me an expecial honor by showing me the sacred relic of the Buddha.

"He approached the altar and, taking a key from his girdle, opened a small gold box covered with wonderful repoussé work, resting upon the knees of the god. Upon opening this box he drew forth a small ivory shrine, also elaborately carved, which he set upon the top of the first box and arranged so that the light from the candles fell upon it. He then opened the ivory box with a small gold key, and I looked in. The relic of the Buddha, a small and insignificant looking piece of dirty brown bone, I paid slight attention to, for in that box, glistening and glowing with the most wonderful color in the light of the candles stood the Emerald Buddha!

"I inquired as to the gem's history and was informed that it had been brought to Ping Yang many centuries before by the priest who brought the relic from Thibet and founded the temple. Neither the fact of its enormous size and value as a jewel, nor its priceless beauty as an example of most exquisite workmanship seemed to appeal to him. To him its value was solely of a religious nature, an image always venerated, next to the relic, as the most precious of all the temple's possessions.

"I told my servant to ask the priest if they would sell it, but he seemed disinclined to make the request until I repeated my injunction rather sharply. When the message had been repeated to the old man, he scowled darkly and, hastily locking his treasures in their double box, he turned without making any reply and began to usher us from the room. I repeated the request, this time using my own store of Chinese, and drew forth a large roll of gold, but the priest waved me aside with an angry word, which sounded like a curse, and pointed to the door. There was nothing left but to go, and I did so, though with the bitterest regret.

"IN THE course of the next week I several times attempted to repeat my offer, but he invariably drew back with a look of intense hatred and refused to listen to me. Upon my fourth or fifth attempt I found him in company with several other Chinamen, who regarded me with dark looks and muttered imprecations, and the next time I appeared in the street I found myself surrounded by quite a mob of excited Chinamen, who assailed me with fierce curses and cries and even made as though to offer me personal violence.

"After that I felt that it would be unsafe for me to venture into that quarter of the town again, and a few days later, finding that even in other sections of the city I was regarded with evident suspicion and dislike, I decided to leave the place and return to Pekin and Hong Kong.

"It was in the latter city that I met Robert Ashton who, like myself, was collecting in China and who, I soon found, possessed an extraordinary knowledge of the subject. This formed a bond of sympathy between us. During our stay there we saw a great deal of Mr. Ashton and he soon became very attentive to my daughter. She seemed rather to welcome Mr. Ashton's attentions and I was gratified to think that in him I might find a son-in-law who would appreciate the collection which has been my life-work.

"He informed me that although he had been in Ping Yang he had never heard of the Emerald Buddha, and proposed to me that he should attempt to secure the jewel for me. I made light of this, but when he said in all seriousness one night that he would obtain it for me provided I would consent to his marriage to my daughter, I agreed, both because I felt his quest was absolutely hopeless, and because I saw no objections to him as a son-in-law in any event. I did not mention my agreement to my daughter, not wishing her to think I was bartering her in return for a mere jewel, and I felt certain she would welcome Mr. Ashton's advances. A few days later he departed for Pekin, and we started home by way of India and Suez.

"Upon my return I questioned my daughter and was amazed and horrified to learn that she bore toward Mr. Ashton a feeling almost of aversion. I explained to her about the promise and at my earnest request and almost at my command she wrote to Mr. Ashton, agreeing to abide by my wishes in the matter. That was six or eight months ago, and I heard nothing from him until two days ago, when he telegraphed that he had arrived in England and would come to see me at once."

"THIS story, as he related it to me last night, was like an adventure from the 'Arabian Nights.' He arrived in Ping Yang one evening at dusk, disguised as a Buddhist pilgrim monk with shaved head and staff in hand, and at once proceeded to the temple with an offering of flowers and prostrated himself before the shrine in prayer.

"Ashton continued in his place, muttering his prayers and pretending to be in great agony of spirit, until one by one the worshippers departed. He pretended to be suffering from some sudden illness, and lay upon the floor moaning pitifully. As the old priest bent over him in inquiry Ashton suddenly seized him by the throat and with his powerful hands choked him into silence. He then gagged him and, taking the keys of the small shrine, proceeded to abstract the coveted Emerald Buddha.

"By the next morning Ashton, with his servant, was miles away, journeying peaceably toward Pekin as an English traveler. His escape, however, was not to be so easily effected. After progressing toward Pekin for two days they became aware that they were being followed by a numerous party of Chinese upon horseback, armed with pikes, bows and arrows, and some muskets. Swerving from the main road, they abandoned their horses, and while Ashton hid in the underbrush, his servant procured at a near village a set of Chinese clothing which Ashton donned. From here on his adventures were exciting and varied, but they at last succeeded in reaching the coast.

"The rest of the story you know. God knows what influences have been at work in his taking off! As for me, I know no more about it than you do."

AS MAJOR TEMPLE concluded his story, he gazed at Sergeant McQuade and myself in turn, then passed his hand nervously over his forehead, as though the strain of the tragedy had begun to tell upon him severely. Biding him good-night, McQuade and I left the room, leaving him sitting dejectedly in his easy chair, patting the head of his great mastiff, Boris.

CHAPTER IX

THE ORIENTAL PERFUME

THE inquest, held the following day in the billiard-room, was a brief affair. The surgeon testified to a simple fracture of the skull, not necessarily sufficient to produce death, although capable of doing so when combined with nervous shock or a weakened condition of the heart. That one or both of the latter agencies had combined with the result of the blow was evidenced by Ashton's almost instantaneous death and the look of horror which was upon his face. There was nothing for the jury to do but render a verdict stating that Robert Ashton had come to his death through a blow upon the head, delivered with some sharp instrument by a person or persons unknown.

I spoke a few words to Sergeant McQuade at the close of the inquest and he informed me that he intended going up to London early that afternoon to interrogate the two Chinamen detained there since the preceding day, and upon my volunteering to accompany him, he seemed rather to welcome my suggestion. I knew perfectly well that until the mystery was solved, not only myself, but Major and Miss Temple and Li Min, as well as the other servants in the house would all be more or less under police surveillance, and I wanted if possible to stay with this case to the end—a feeling that became intensified whenever I thought of Muriel Temple. If I could do anything to help her, I would, cost what it might.

I hastened to my room, therefore, and for a time busied myself in arranging my luggage. As I did so I thought I heard a slight sound in the green room across the hall, the one in which the tragedy had occurred, and glancing into the mirror of my dresser, I saw Li Min. He was evidently searching for something. Now if he, or any of his confederates had killed Ashton, they certainly must have secured the Emerald Buddha and taken it with them; the empty case, I remembered, lay upon the table. What then, could this Chinaman be searching for with such evident eagerness and anxiety?

With a few rapid steps I crossed the intervening hall and appeared in the doorway. He at once appeared confused, and made a quick pretense of being busily occupied in the business of setting the room to rights. Then I became aware of a curiously pungent, yet sweet, aromatic odor, which had something vaguely familiar about it, and suddenly it flashed into my mind that this was the curious scent I had noticed upon Miss Temple's handkerchief—the one dropped by her in Ashton's room.

After some careful experimenting, I found that it came from a small cake of soap, of a dull green color, which lay upon the washstand where it had evidently been left by Ashton. I picked it up, observing its perfume closely, then, noticing that the Chinaman was regarding me with a particularly malevolent gaze, I retired to my room, taking the soap with me. I had no definite purpose in this except to keep it in order to identify the perfume. I threw it into my satchel and completed the arrangements for my departure.

I WAS soon ready to go, and after leaving my bag with one of McQuade's men, who was to accompany us to the railway station, I sought Miss Temple in the hope of saying good-by to her before my departure. I was lucky enough to find her in the library, sewing, and looking unusually pale and distressed. She greeted me with rising color, and I confess that I, too, felt a trifle of embarrassment. But the beauty of her face, the clear, honest expression of her eyes once more convinced me that whatever were her reasons for silence they did not in any way implicate her in this tangled affair.

"I have come to say good-by," I said.

"Oh, are you going—I did not know——" She half rose, her face filled with lively concern.

"I'm afraid I've already overstayed my time," I replied. "After all, Miss Temple, I came as a stranger and must thank you and your father for making me as welcome as you have under the existing painful circumstances."

"I have not thought of you as a stranger, Mr. Morgan," she answered simply. "You have been a great help during this trying ordeal, and I am sorry that you must go—very sorry." There was a ring of sincerity in her voice that thrilled me. My heart gave a leap, and as I met her eyes I realized all of a sudden that go where I might, I could not go very far away from Muriel Temple. "I do not go because I desire it," I replied, in a voice from which I could not eliminate the depth and intensity of my feelings, "but if it lies in my power I intend to find the solution of this terrible affair. My reward, if I can do so, will be the knowledge that I have served you."

"You are very good, Mr. Morgan. I shall never forget it—never!" She rose and placed her hand in mine, and allowed it to remain there for a monent—a moment which seemed far too short to me. "And when you have good news, you will come to The Oaks and tell us about it, will you not?" she concluded, with a smile that went to my heart.

"Indeed I shall, Miss Temple—you may be sure of that! And I hope it may be soon."

"So do I," she said, and I turned to leave her. Then I suddenly bethought myself of the strange Oriental perfume. "Miss Temple," I said, with some hesitation—"you will pardon me, I know, but you may remember that the handkerchief which was found in Mr. Ashton's room was strongly scented with a powerful Oriental perfume. May I ask what that perfume is, and where you procured it?"

"Perfume?" she ejaculated, in surprise. "Why, Mr. Morgan, I never use any—never!"

"You never use any?" I stammered. "But it was upon your handkerchief—I thought that perhaps you might have got it during your travels in China."

"The handkerchief was mine, Mr. Morgan—that is true, but of the perfume I know absolutely nothing. Why do you ask?"

I hardly knew what reply to make. The identity of the perfume of the soap and the handkerchief meant nothing—pointed to nothing, and yet I could not shake off the idea that there was some intimate connection between them which would go far toward solving the mystery of Robert Ashton's death. I bade her good-by with some simple explanation of my question, and hurried out to find McQuade.

* * *

I FOUND him with one of his men upon the porch roof busily engaged in making photographs of the bloody hand-print upon the window-sill of the green room.

"Is it not a curious fact, Mr. Morgan," he remarked, as he reached the foot of the short ladder he had used to ascend to the roof, "that although Li Min had not only the motive for the murder, namely the securing of the Emerald Buddha, but also the opportunity, and while the hand-print which I have been photographing is small and delicate, like that of a woman or of Li Min, yet I can see no possible way in which the windows and doors of that room could have been bolted after the crime was committed, neither Major Temple or yourself having any reason to do it were Li Min the guilty person. I have been prepared to believe all along that Li Min was on this roof at or near daybreak yesterday morning and I do not mind telling you I have discovered certain evidence which had before escaped me. Yet how could he have entered that room, murdered Mr. Ashton, secured the jewel, climbed out of the window and shut and bolted it behind him on the inside is beyond my comprehension!"

"Have you searched the attic above the room?" I asked.

"Thoroughly," he replied. "The lath and plaster of the ceiling are absolutely unbroken. The four walls offer equal impossibilities."

"Then it would seem that we have exhausted all possible clews," I observed. I did not think it worth while to take him into my confidence regarding Li Min, or the perfumed soap; and the brass-headed poker which I had placed in the drawer in my room I had for the moment completely forgotten.

"So it seems," he remarked thoughtfully. "This is by long odds the strangest case I have ever worked on."

As we rounded the corner of the house we suddenly saw Li Min dart out of the main entrance, closely pursued by the officer to whom I had entrusted my luggage. The Chinaman carried in his hand my Gladstone bag and was running with incredible swiftness toward the road. Before I had time to make a move, McQuade darted forward and intercepted him, knocking from his hand with lightning-like quickness a long knife which he drew from his blouse. The two of them tumbled over upon the turf, McQuade rising first with my satchel in his hand. He looked at it, and seeing my name upon it, handed it to me with a grim smile. "You must have a valuable kit here, sir," he said, "or else this fellow has taken leave of his senses!"

He nodded to his assistant, who promptly stepped forward and snapped a pair of handcuffs upon the sullen looking Oriental. "The whole outfit isn't worth five pounds," I said, laughing, and picked up the satchel. As I did so the catch came open and my small collection of flannel shirts, toilet articles, sketching materials, and so forth, tumbled upon the grass. McQuade joined in my laugh and assisted me in replacing my effects. "Nothing much here, sir," he said, but I did not fail to notice that he observed each article closely as we repacked the satchel.

* * *

WE DROVE to town in the high cart, and after depositing the Chinaman at the jail, took a hurried lunch at the Half Moon and left for London on the early afternoon express, arriving at Waterloo Station about dusk. I gave McQuade the address of my lodgings and studio in Tottenham Court Road, and I left him with the understanding that if anything significant developed he would call upon me if I could assist him in any way.

It was past eight when I arrived at my studio. I must have been unusually tired, for I dozed in my chair, and was not aroused until after eleven, when I heard a loud knock at the studio door. I sprang up, somewhat confused, and opening the door found under it a note from McQuade, requesting me to meet him at once at Number 30 Kingsgate Street. I threw on a warm coat and soft hat and summoned a cab. The driver looked a bit surprised at the address, and asked me to repeat it.

I rejoiced in the hope that the examination of the two Exeter Chinamen had resulted in the discovery of both the missing jewel and the murderer, and thought with pleasure of the happy tidings I should bring to Muriel. It was while occupied in these dreams that I felt my cab draw up alongside the curb, just as the hour of midnight was striking from old St. Paul's.

The house was an old one, and its exterior was gloomy and forbidding. The whole atmosphere of the place was depressing in the extreme, and I pulled the bell with feelings of inward trepidation. So long an interval elapsed before any response came that I was on the point of ringing it again, when I suddenly heard soft footsteps in the hallway and the door was silently opened. I stepped within, mechanically, unable to observe the person who had admitted me.

I had taken but a single step into the passage, when the door was swiftly closed behind me and at the same instant a bag of heavy cloth was thrust over my head and my arms were pinioned from behind in a vice-like grip. The bag was drawn closely about my throat by a noose in the edge of it, and before I knew it I felt myself being slowly but surely strangled.

CHAPTER X

IN THE TEMPLE OF BUDDHA

I WAS lifted bodily by two or three silent figures and carried a considerable distance, part of the way down a steep flight of stairs and through what might have been a tunnel or cellar. Presently I heard the opening of a heavy door and in a moment I was thrown roughly upon a bench, and my pockets systematically searched. My captors evidently were not looking for money, for the only thing they took from me were my keys. After this they left me, huddled up in a corner of the bench, afraid to cry out or make a move in any direction.

The room in which I now found myself was as silent as the tomb, and yet I felt that it was lighted brightly and that there were others in it besides myself. I could feel that it was warm, and through the folds of the bag about my head came the acrid, half-sweet smell of opium or Chinese incense, or both. I realized at once that I was in the hands of some of Li Min's friends, and no doubt the note which purported to come from McQuade had been merely a decoy. I recollected now with vividness the interview I had witnessed the afternoon before between Li Min and some fellow countryman of his at the gateway in the hedge back of The Oaks. No doubt the crafty Oriental had kept his confederates in London fully posted as to both my movements and those of Sergeant McQuade. What on earth they could want with me I was unable to imagine.

I reached out softly with my right hand—I had not been bound—and touched a wall, hung with heavy embroidered satin. The bench upon which I sat was of hard polished wood. I reached up quickly, loosed the cord which held the bag tightly about my neck, and with a swift motion, lifted it from my head. The sight I beheld astounded me.

I was in a long, low room, the bench upon which I sat being at the extreme end of it. The walls were hung from end to end with bright colored satin, wonderfully embroidered with birds, flowers, dragons and strange Chinese characters. The floor was of wood, dark, and polished with the walking of countless softly-shod feet. Facing me at the far end of the room was a great red and gold wooden screen, carved and lacquered, and representing some mysterious Chinese figures, whether gods or demons I could not tell. In the center of this screen was an opening, a sort of altar, brightly lighted by a large number of wax candles, within which hung a representation of the god Buddha, marvelously embroidered upon dull red satin, with gold and silver threads. Behind the candles stood a small gold casket, or shrine, the door of which was standing open, disclosing an empty interior. The altar in front of the candles was covered with a profusion of dishes containing flowers, rice and other foods.

Before the altar knelt a tall, gaunt figure, his back turned toward me, bowed in prayer. He wore a long, dark brown robe, girdled loosely about the waist with a leather belt, and his gray hair was confined in a long queue which hung below his waist. He took no notice whatever of my movements and remained in silent contemplation of the picture of the god before him. A number of sticks of incense were burning in a brass jar upon the altar and the room was filled with a thin, waving, blue haze, which circled softly around the great painted silk lanterns hung from the ceiling.

I felt as though I had been suddenly and mysteriously transported from a dark and gloomy London street to some wonderful temple in the far off city of Pekin. I rubbed my eyes, and moved uneasily upon my hard bench, but no movement upon the part of the silent worshipper indicated that he so much as knew of my presence.

SUDDENLY a door at my left was opened and I observed two dark and forbidding-looking Chinamen enter, carrying between them a limp and apparently lifeless figure, which they placed upon the bench beside me. The figure was not blindfolded as I had been, and I recoiled, sick and trembling. It was Sergeant McQuade!

The Chinamen paid no attention to me, and quietly withdrew. I placed my hand upon the detective's heart, and was overjoyed to find that it still beat. In a few moments I saw his eyes slowly open and he clutched feebly at his throat. I followed his movements and found a heavy cord about his neck, so tightly drawn as almost to prevent his breathing. This I quickly removed and in a few moments he was able to speak. His first words, after a glance of intense surprise at our surroundings, were to ask me why I had sent for him. I told him I had not done so.

"But you asked me to come to this address at once—that you had important news. I have two men outside, but these devils got me before I could blow my whistle. Not much use to try it now!" he observed, looking about grimly.

"I sent you no note," I replied. "On the contrary, I got one from you. That is why I am here."

"We are both nicely trapped, it seems!" he growled. "What have you learned—anything?"

"Nothing. They took my bunch of keys and left me here."

"Your keys!" he muttered, softly. "Your keys. What could they have wanted with them?" He seemed lost in thought.

Further conversation was interrupted by the sudden opening of the door on our left. Some score or more of Chinamen crowded in and were at once joined by the figure of the priest, who rose to his feet and advanced toward the center of the room. He was a terrible looking old man, his face drawn and leathery, his eyes like burning coals, his mouth cruel and thin-lipped. All the others seemed to pay him deep respect. One of their number advanced and handed him a large object, which he eagerly grasped. It was my Gladstone bag. McQuade and I glanced at each other in sudden comprehension.

The old priest placed the bag upon the floor and proceeded to ransack it with eager, trembling hands. The others crowded about, every face tense and full of expectation. Presently his eye fell upon the small green cake of soap which I had thrown loosely into the bag upon my departure from The Oaks. He seized it with a cry of triumph and, taking a knife from his girdle, proceeded with extreme care to cut the cake of soap in two. The crowding figures about him hung upon his movements with intense anxiety. The room was as silent as death. Suddenly, with a loud cry, the priest broke the cake of soap in two, and there, within it, in a cavity about two inches long, lay the lost Emerald Buddha, its wonderful color flashing and glowing in the light from the lantern above!

I was absolutely dumb with amazement. Undeniably there before me lay the cause of Mr. Ashton's death, yet how it came to be in that cake of soap, and what light its presence there threw upon the manner of his sudden and tragic end, was beyond my comprehension. That it might cause suspicion to point in *my* direction did not for the moment occur to me.

THE kneeling priest rose to his feet with a glad cry and, holding the image reverently in the hollow of his two hands, advanced toward the altar, the others crowding closely about him. Arrived at the shrine, he placed the figure carefully upon its pedestal within the golden casket, and as the light of many candles fell full upon it, the whole crowd knelt down and began a weird, sing-song prayer that must have been a chant of joy, or some service of purification, now that their long lost deity had been returned to them. Presently the strange sounds died away, and the various Chinamen placed offerings of fruit, flowers and food upon the altar. The priest rose, and faced us. I had a feeling that our turn was now to come.

The tall, gaunt figure came close to us and examined both our faces minutely. I fancy he was the same priest that Ashton had all but done for in Ping Yang and, from his look of intense hatred and ferocity, I feel sure that had he recognized McQuade or myself as either his assailant or Major Temple, our moments in this life would have been numbered. In answer apparently to the questions of his followers he shook his head vigorously.

Then ensued a heated altercation between himself and part of the Chinamen on the one hand and the remainder of the crowd on the other, the subject of which, I could plainly see, was the fate of the detective and myself. At last they all turned back to the altar, and the priest took from it two pieces of wood, slightly curved, some four or five inches long, and shaped not unlike the half of a banana if it were cut in two lengthwise. I saw that they were the Chinese luck-sticks, which the petitioner casts before the altar, wishing, as he does so, for that prayer which he desires the god to grant him. If the sticks fall with the flat sides of both upward, he is lucky—his prayer is granted; if with the flat sides of both downward, his prayer is refused. If one stick falls each way, there is no decision and the trial is made again.

As the priest took up these sticks from the altar a gleam of comprehension passed over the faces of the crowd about him. Several of their number sprang forward and dragged us before the altar. It was evidently their intention to leave the matter of our fate in the hands of the Buddha, and as I glanced at the peaceful and beneficent face of the image before me I wondered whether he, or blind luck, would control our destinies.

McQuade they took first. He was led directly in front of the altar, and the two sticks, placed with the flat sides together, were put into his hands. He was then directed, by signs and a few muttered English words, to cast them upon the slab, and in a moment the hardwood sticks clattered before the altar. I leaned forward anxiously and looked at them. The flat sides of both were upward! McQuade was safe.

THE Chinamen thrust him aside angrily, and bent upon me their angry glances. I was pushed forward by many hands, and the luck-sticks forced into my unwilling fingers. I had never thought much about death, and now it approached me in all its grisly terrors. McQuade had been spared my agony, for I felt sure he did not know the meaning of the ceremony through which he had just passed. He had thrown dice with death, and won, and yet he did not know it. But to me, the trial came in all its horrible reality. I knew that upon the fall of those bits of wood depended my life—that within a few seconds of time I should either be free, or condemned to die by one of those unspeakably horrible means that only the Chinese understand and delight in. Their deity had been profaned and they wanted a victim, and if his down-turned thumb claimed me as a sacrifice, I knew that no power on earth could save me.

I shook with nervous dread, not so much through fear of death itself as of the manner of dying. My hands trembled—I could scarcely keep the sticks from falling to the floor. Presently I pulled myself together and determined to put a brave face upon the matter. The Chinamen about me were enjoying my sufferings keenly, as I could see from the diabolic grins upon their dark faces.

I threw the sticks from me with a quick nervous movement, and then almost feared to look upon them. At last I did so, and what I saw was almost as bad as what I feared to see. Instead of the two flat sides of the sticks being uppermost, they lay one each way, and I was forced to throw again. The Chinese were evidently delighted. Any method of torture which is prolonged seems to please them beyond measure. I have heard that one of the most terrible they have invented is that of keeping a prisoner awake. For days and days sleep is prevented, and the victim ultimately goes raving mad.

My nerves were too much shaken to prolong the agony. I cast the sticks again upon the altar-slab and bent over them with a prayer to God. One stick fell at once with its flat side uppermost. The other rolled over and over until it rested almost at the Buddha's feet. At last it trembled, half turned over, then stopped. It, like the other, gave the favorable sign! I was saved!

In the sudden relief from the nervous tension I almost fell, but the Chinamen, cheated of their revenge, gave me no time for any such exhibitions of emotion. McQuade and I were seized and in a few moments our arms were tightly bound behind us and heavy bags placed over our heads. We were then roughly hurried through a series of rooms, once crossing what seemed to be a brick-paved court, undoubtedly in the open air, then for an interminable distance through what seemed to be dark narrow lanes and muddy streets, until at last our hoods were removed, our feet bound, and we were thrown into a narrow area-way, some cotton-waste being jammed into our mouths to prevent our making any outcry.

THERE we were discovered at daybreak, some four or five hours later, nearly frozen to death, by a watchman who released us from our bonds and, upon hearing from Sergeant McQuade who he was, hastened to find us a cab.

The detective drove at once to number 30 Kingsgate Street and, finding his two men still on duty, ordered them to enter the house. The bell giving no response, McQuade and his men burst in the door. The house was completely unfurnished. We descended into the cellar, but found no signs of occupancy anywhere. Evidently there was a tunnel somewhere, leading from this house to some other in the neighborhood, or else the Chinamen had boldly carried us out through the backyard and into some house adjoining. The Sergeant ordered his men to return to Scotland Yard, obtain a relief and investigate every house in the block and even those on the opposite side of the street. I felt no great interest in the capture of the Chinamen. They had the Emerald Buddha, with a better right to it than ever Ashton had, and it seemed useless to bring trouble upon any relatives of his by placing in their hands so dangerous an article. I was infinitely more concerned in determining who was responsible for Robert Ashton's death.

I left McQuade and returned to my studio, agreeing to meet him there at three the same afternoon and return to The Oaks with him. Why he wished to go I did not then see, but I was only too glad of an opportunity to see Miss Temple again. In reply to my questions as to the two Chinamen from Exeter, he informed me that they knew nothing of the matter and had been discharged.

CHAPTER XI

INSPECTOR BURNS' CONCLUSIONS

I WAS awaiting McQuade's arrival, when a messenger boy dashed up to my door and handed me a telegram.

> Police have discovered weapon in your room wrapped in your handkerchief.
>
> MURIEL TEMPLE.

So strong is the consciousness of innocence that even after reading this telegram I had no thought of what this new discovery might portend for me. It was strange, I thought, that I had forgotten the thing. I laid it open upon the table, thinking that if the Scotland Yard man did not already know of the discovery, I would be able to inform him of it on his arrival.

He came on the stroke of three and with him a burly, deep-chested, ruddy-faced man with twinkling eyes and iron-gray whiskers, whom he introduced to me as Inspector Burns, of Scotland Yard.

"I have brought Inspector Burns with me," McQuade said slowly. "He wants to ask you a few questions."

I turned to the Inspector and smiled.

"Mr. Morgan," he began, "about that cake of soap which contained the missing jewel—will you be so good as to tell Sergeant McQuade and myself how it happened to be in your possession?"

"Certainly," I replied, without hesitation, and outlined the facts.

"Mr. Morgan," inquired Inspector Burns, when I had finished, "why, since you were pretending to assist Sergeant McQuade by every means in your power, did you fail to disclose to him the facts you have just related? Did you have any reason to suspect that the jewel was hidden in the cake of soap?"

"None whatever. I did not mention the matter to the Sergeant because it seemed too vague and unimportant."

The Inspector frowned. "You committed a grave error. I dislike to imply that it might have been anything worse." I began to feel indignant at the tone and manner in which he was conducting his cross-questioning.

"Is it not true, Mr. Morgan," he asked suddenly, "that Miss Temple was violently opposed to any marriage with Mr. Ashton, and that either his death, or the abstracting of the jewel which was to have been the price paid by him for her hand, would have been of great benefit to her?"

"I suppose they would," I answered sulkily, "if you put it that way."

"Did not Miss Temple ask you to assist her in preventing this marriage, Mr. Morgan, and did you not promise to help her in every way in your power?"

"This is absurd!" I cried. "You will be accusing me of murdering Mr. Ashton next!"

"We only know, so far, that the jewel for which Mr. Ashton was murdered has been found in your possession!"

The significant way in which he uttered

these words thrilled me with a vague sense of alarm. There upon the table, before Sergeant McQuade, lay Miss Temple's telegram. It was open, and I felt sure he had already read it. My mind seemed confused, my brain on fire. The Inspector turned to McQuade. "Sergeant," he said, "you have the handkerchief in question with you, I believe."

McQuade drew from his pocket the folded handkerchief and requested me to examine its surface with a magnifying-glass. I did so, and observed that it was covered with minute particles of some green substance.

"Do you see anything?" asked the Inspector.

"Yes," I replied. "The handkerchief is full of fine green specks, but I can not imagine what they are."

"They are bits of soap, Mr. Morgan."

"Soap?"

"Exactly." The Inspector looked at me keenly. "Has it not occurred to you, Mr. Morgan, that it was first necessary to cut it in two and hollow out a space in the interior? Is it not also quite evident that bits of soap must have been carefully collected upon some object, this handkerchief for instance, and subsequently thrown away, leaving the minute particles that you see still clinging to its surface?"

"Yes," I replied, dazed, "but who?"

"THAT, Mr. Morgan, is just what we are trying to find out. It hardly seems likely that Mr. Ashton would have gone to all this trouble, although it is possible, since he had reason, after his quarrel with Major Temple, to fear an attempt to gain possession of the jewel. If he did, how does it happen that he used Miss Temple's handkerchief for the purpose? He may have found it upon the floor and so utilized it, but it seems unlikely."

"What then, seems more likely?" I asked hotly. "Would the murderer have gone to all that trouble to get the stone and then have left it behind?"

"Possibly, Mr. Morgan, to have been recovered at leisure—as you, indeed, happened to recover it. Such a jewel would not be a good thing to have in one's possession immediately after the murder!"

"But it would have taken fifteen or twenty minutes," I objected, "and we burst in the door within less than ten minutes from the time Mr. Ashton's cry was heard."

"The alarm was given by you, Mr. Morgan. You alone heard Mr. Ashton's cry. Whether you heard it at six o'clock, or five, or four rests upon your word alone. We do not accuse you, remember—we are trying to arrive at the truth. The facts we have just stated, coupled with Miss Temple's refusal to explain her early expedition from the house that morning, all point to something we do not yet understand. We are convinced of one thing: that the Chinaman did not commit the murder, for he would have taken the stone along with him."

"I do not agree with you there," I said. "Mr. Ashton may have hidden the jewel himself, and then the Chinaman, after committing the murder, may have been unable to find it. That would account for Li Min's subsequent search of the room, and his confederates' actions when they began to suspect that the emerald was hidden within it."

"You are right in what you say, Mr. Morgan, if Mr. Ashton hid the jewel himself. But the subsequent actions of Li Min and his confederates are equally explainable upon the theory that they had nothing to do with the murder whatever and were merely attempting to steal the jewel at the first opportunity."

I made no reply. They seemed to be weaving a net of circumstantial evidence about me that, try as I would, I did not seem able to break through.

"We now come to another curious fact," continued the Inspector. "The weapon with which this murder was apparently committed was found this morning locked in a drawer in the room you occupied at Major Temple's house. It was wrapped in a handkerchief marked with your initials. Can you tell us how it came to be there?"

I turned to the Inspector with a bitter laugh. "I can tell you," I replied, "but I presume you will not believe me. I put the weapon, which was a brass-headed poker, there myself. I found it on the lawn outside of Mr. Ashton's window the day before yesterday."

"Why did you also conceal this important piece of evidence from Sergeant McQuade?" demanded the Inspector in a stern voice.

I felt like a fool, and looked like one as well, I fear. "I forgot it," I mumbled in confusion.

"You forgot it! Can you expect a sane man to believe any such folly as that?"

"Folly, or not," I replied, "it is the truth! I intended to show it privately to Sergeant McQuade. He was in Exeter at the time and I placed it in the drawer for safe keeping; when he returned that evening, it was just in time to listen to Major Temple's story of his experiences in China, and when he had finished, it was close to midnight and the matter had completely slipped my mind. The inquest the following morning took my entire attention, and after that the sudden arrest of Li Min, and our departure for London. You know what has occurred since. I had forgotten the matter completely until I received this telegram from Miss Temple not half an hour before you came." I took the dispatch from the table and handed it to the Inspector, who read it with interest.

"Why did Miss Temple send you this?" he inquired suddenly.

"I do not know—I suppose she thought it would be of interest to me."

"Did it not occur to you that it might be in the nature of a warning?"

Again I saw a chasm yawning before me.

"Miss Temple has no reason to suspect me of any part in the matter," I replied. "Do you think it likely that, if I had committed the murder, I could have left such damning evidence where the police would have been certain to discover it, and wrapped in my own handkerchief? I am as innocent of any complicity in Mr. Ashton's murder as you are!"

"I HAVE no objection, Mr. Morgan, to outlining a theory of the murder which seems to fit the facts as we know them. Miss Temple, desperate and detesting Ashton, retired to her room, but could not sleep. At some hour later she went to Ashton's room. He refused to give up her letter, they quarreled and in her rage she grasped the poker and struck him with it. Believing him only stunned, she secured the jewel, but fearing to take it from the room and wishing only to prevent Mr. Ashton from using it, she hid it in the cake of soap. The pieces, collected upon her handkerchief, were thrown out of the window. But on feeling Ashton's heart, she found it very weak, and to destroy the evidence, she threw the poker out of the window, and hurriedly left the room, forgetting the handkerchief in her agitation.

Toward morning she decided to flee and changed her clothes and shoes, but once more went to Ashton's room, to assure herself that he no longer lived. In doing this she awoke you, by accident or design. She threw herself upon your mercy, and you agreed to stand by her, advised against running away, but suggested that she go down and get the poker so that it might be replaced or otherwise disposed of. You meanwhile entered the room, bolted the door on the inside, and left by the window. It is probable that you examined the body, your hand became stained with blood, and you rested it upon the sill while closing the window. You then reentered by the hall window, meeting Miss Temple and taking the poker from her.

"You placed it in your room, meanwhile urging her to change her dress and shoes. A little later you aroused the house and rebolted the window while Major Temple was not observing you. You later secured the soap containing the jewel. You no doubt intended to replace the poker, but no opportunity occurred."

He glanced at me triumphantly. I laughed, though with little mirth. "Why don't you simply say I killed Ashton and put the weapon in my dresser, and leave Miss Temple out of it entirely?" I said. "It's equally plausible."

"Possibly so, though that would account for neither the handkerchief nor Miss Temple's leaving the house that morning."

"She has already accounted for the one, she can readily do so for the other," I replied.

"That we shall see," said the Inspector, rising from his chair. "We will go to Exeter at once, and question Miss Temple."

CHAPTER XII

A DISAPPEARANCE

INSPECTOR BURNS and his companion had left me to myself on the trip down, and I turned over in my mind the curious events of the past forty-eight hours. My conversation with Miss Temple on the night of the murder had, I presumed, been overheard by one of the servants, from whom it had been wormed by McQuade's men during my absence. But the thought that Muriel Temple could be guilty was preposterous. I knew that I was prejudiced in her favor, that I had come to love her, that nothing could ever change it, but only two real bits of evidence connected her with Ashton's death—one, the presence of her handkerchief in the room and the curious use to which it had been put; the other, her early morning expedition from the house and her sudden return. If she would but explain the latter, I felt sure Inspector Burns' theory would fall to the ground like a house of cards. Why she refused to do so, I could not imagine—that she had some strong compelling reason, I felt sure. What? Was she shielding her father? I could not believe that even for her father's sake she would allow an innocent person to be accused.

On arriving at The Oaks, Inspector Burns asked to see the scene of the murder and to interview Miss Temple "My daughter has retired, I fancy," the Major said. "I have not seen her since dinner, but I will send her word." He led the way, his mastiff, Boris, bringing up the rear. We first entered the room I had occupied. The drawer was soon unlocked and there lay the wretched poker wrapped in my handkerchief, just as I had left it. Inspector Burns took it up. "Hardly heavy enough to fracture a man's skull," he muttered. "What do you know about this thing?" he inquired of Major Temple.

The Major looked puzzled. He had not seen the weapon before. I wondered how Miss Temple came to know of it, in order to notify me.

"It is half of an old poker," he replied, "that I gave to the gardener for a stake in laying out his flower-beds. It had been roughly ground to a point, as you see, so that it might be readily thrust into the earth. The last time I saw it he was using it upon the pathways about the house."

"Then it was not in the green room?" asked the Inspector.

"Never, to my knowledge," said Major Temple. "There is no fireplace in that room!"

The Inspector closed the drawer with a slam. "Then if this was the weapon the murderer used," he said, rather lamely, "he must have taken it along with him."

WE ALL adjourned to the green room which the Inspector went over without discovering anything new. The dog seemed strangely oppressed by the surroundings, but after sniffing about nervously with a low whine, crawled under the bed and lay quiet. We were on the point of leaving when the maid rushed in and, calling Major Temple aside, handed him a sealed envelope. The Major passed his hand nervously over his forehead, and turned to us. "Gentlemen," he said, in a frightened voice, "Miss Temple can not be found!"

We all turned toward him in intense surprise. "What does this mean?" asked the Inspector. "Where is she?"

"This note, addressed to me, was lying upon her writing-desk," replied the Major in a daze.

"Read it," commanded the Inspector, as we all hastily adjourned to the library.

Major Temple opened the letter with trembling fingers; then read aloud:

> MY DEAR FATHER: I am going to London to see Mr. Morgan. They suspect him of the murder. I overheard the police talking about it this morning. I do not know what to do. I can not let an innocent person suffer. It may be better for me to remain away altogether. If I *must* speak I can only ask for forgiveness.
>
> MURIEL.

If the earth had opened up and engulfed me I could not have been more astounded. I glanced at her father—he seemed shrunken and old, his head bowed upon his breast. Could he—I refused to think—yet he feared either for himself, or, God help me, for her. No consideration for any one else could have so terribly affected him. I looked at the cold, accusing faces of the two Scotland Yard men and groaned inwardly. In a moment the Inspector spoke. "Have you a telephone in the house, Major Temple?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the Major, rousing himself from his lethargy. "In the hall, near the foot of the staircase."

The Inspector nodded to McQuade, who arose without a word and left the room. The net was fast closing about some one, but about whom I could not yet see.

"Mr. Morgan, have you anything to say in explanation of this letter?" I heard Major Temple asking me.

"Miss Temple writes as though she believed *you* would understand what she means," I replied. "*I* certainly do not."

"I?" cried the Major. "It's absolute nonsense to me!" He threw up his hands in absolute dismay. If this were acting, I thought, it could not be better done.

"You have heard my theory of the murder, Mr. Morgan," said the Inspector coldly. "The note is plain enough. She will confess before she will allow *you* to bear the penalty of her crime."

"Her crime!" Major Temple was on his feet in an instant, his eyes blazing. "Your words are ill chosen, sir!" Poor man, he did not know of the damning circumstances the Inspector had so cleverly woven into his accusing theory.

"Not at all, Major Temple," replied the imperturbable Inspector. "Sergeant McQuade is at present ordering the arrest of your daughter. She will be apprehended as soon as she arrives in London, and we will hear her story at the Magistrate's hearing to-morrow."

"But," I cried, in consternation, "this is ridiculous! Don't you see that——"

"Mr. Morgan, the time has come for the truth. It is my painful duty to place you under arrest!"

"On what charge?" I demanded hotly.

"For complicity in Robert Ashton's murder!" he replied, and placed his hand upon my shoulder.

* * *

I SPENT a dreary enough night in the library, sometimes talking with McQuade, who dozed upon a couch, but for the most part engaged on the maddening problem of Robert Ashton's death.

I fell into a doze toward morning, and awoke trembling, and listened. Far off I heard the mournful howling of a dog, a series of low, unearthly howls that would die slowly away only to be once more repeated. It seemed like the moaning of an animal in great pain. Presently, as I listened, there came a great yelp, and thereafter silence. The matter had passed from my mind by the time our coffee was brought to us, and a little later we set out for the town.

On arrival, I made my first acquaintance with the interior of a cell. McQuade informed me I would be taken before the Magistrate for a hearing at ten o'clock. I asked whether he had received any word regarding Miss Temple, and he told me she would arrive during the forenoon. Major Temple and the servants were to come in to the hearing, at which they would be wanted as witnesses. I secured a morning paper and resigned myself to a tedious wait of somewhat over two hours. I was strangely calm and self-possessed. The ordeal through which I was about to pass seemed to give me slight concern. But for Miss Temple I feared greatly.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRIAL

WHEN I was led forth and placed in the dock I gazed at the crowded benches before me with a dull sense of annoyance. I looked up at the Magistrate and found him to be a little red-faced man, with a stern, but not unkind expression. The finding of the coroner's inquest was first read, and then Major Temple was placed upon the witness stand. The old gentleman looked more shrunken and old than ever—his face was yellow, his eyes hollow and heavy from want of sleep, his hands trembling with excitement. I could well understand his agitation, with his daughter under arrest and hurrying to Exeter to undergo that most terrible of all ordeals, a hearing on a charge of murder. The Magistrate began his examination with characteristic incisiveness.

"Major Temple," he said, "you are here as a witness in the case of Mr. Owen Morgan charged with complicity in the murder of Robert Ashton."

The Major bowed, but remained silent. Then followed some preliminary questions establishing the facts that I had been a stranger to all of them, that I had seen and knew the value of the Emerald Buddha, and that the Major had insisted, against his daughter's will, upon carrying out the marriage agreement with Ashton.

"The securing of the jewel, then, from Mr. Ashton, would have released her from the arrangement?"

"If Mr. Ashton had not had it he could not have carried out his agreement, of course."

"At what time did you retire on the night of the murder?"

"Shortly before midnight."

Further questioning brought out the events of that night as the reader already knows them, up to our finding Ashton on the floor dead.

"Could Mr. Morgan have fastened the window without your knowing it?"

"I suppose he could—I paid little attention to him."

"What happened then?"

"After our examination of the room we closed and locked the door. We then had some coffee, after which Mr. Morgan went into Exeter and notified the police."

"Major Temple, there is a window at the end of the hallway in the west wing, which opens on to the roof over the porch. Is this window usually bolted?"

"Always. I generally see to it myself. I have a valuable collection and am afraid of thieves."

"Did you do so that night?"

"I did. I saw that it was bolted after seeing Mr. Ashton to his room and before retiring to my own."

This comprised the bulk of Major Temple's testimony. He was followed by Gibson, who corroborated all that his master had said, and similar testimony was given by the maid. There was a feature of the latter's testimony, however, which bore more directly upon the case. She had been, it seems, on the landing of the main stairway, after dinner, waiting for Miss Temple to come up-stairs. It was her habit to sit there, she said, while waiting for Miss Temple. In this position she was almost directly above the latter and myself during the conversation we had had immediately after dinner on the night of the tragedy. She testified that she had heard Miss Temple say in a loud and agitated voice that she would "never marry Robert Ashton, never!" and asked me to help her, and that I had replied that she could depend upon me absolutely. Immediately after this her mistress had come up-stairs and gone to her room.

"Did you accompany her to her room?" asked the Magistrate?

"No, sir. She told me as how she intended to read until quite late, sir, and that I could go to bed at once, as she would not require my assistance."

"Was this unusual?"

"It was, a bit, sir. I most always helped her to undress, sir."

"And you went to your room at once?"

"Yes, sir. I did, sir, and to sleep, sir."

"How were you awakened?"

"I heard some one crying 'Help! Help!' I threw on some clothes as quick as I could, sir, and ran out into the hall. Then I seen the master run into the hallway of the west wing, and Gibson after him, and I follows them. After that, sir, I was sent for a candle."

The testimony of the other servants was similar to that of Gibson and the maid. They had heard some one crying for help, and had rushed into the hall.

THE SERGEANT McQUADE'S testimony was, in some ways, the most interesting of all. I began to see that this astute gentleman had by no means been as frank with me as I had been with him. He testified to finding Miss Temple's handkerchief in Mr. Ashton's room, and to finding the window at the end of the hallway unbolted. He produced photographs and measurements of the bloody hand-print found upon Mr. Ashton's window-sill and compared them with measurements made of my hands earlier in the day.

It appeared that, while the hand-print was small and too smeared for absolute identification, it could readily have been made by my hand, which is rather below medium size. He testified that he found similar marks upon the sill of the hall window, pointing inward; also scratches in the paint, evidently made by some one climbing through the window from without; and foot-prints in the thin, wet mold on the porch roof, made by some one either wearing soft slippers or in his stocking feet. He found traces of this mold on the white sill of the hall window, and traced prints of it upon the polished wooden floor of the hallway, from the window as far as the doorway of my room.

He could not find any prints of this nature *within* my room, nor could he say that the person making them did not go beyond my room, but only that the foot-prints could not be traced beyond my door. The walking of many feet in the hallway between Mr. Ashton's door and mine had obliterated the marks and prevented his tracing them beyond that point, if they had gone beyond. They were small foot-prints, and somewhat indistinct, yet showing clearly as faint, dull patches upon the polished floor—clearly a man's foot-prints, though smaller than the average. Measurements proved conclusively that they could readily have been made by me. I sat in the dock amazed—wondering if by any chance I had suddenly developed somnambulistic tendencies and had performed these various acts while walking in my sleep. I felt that both the Magistrate and the crowd in the court-room were coming to regard me as an extremely dangerous character.

The Sergeant showed conclusively that no one had descended from the porch roof, and spoke of the woman's foot-prints in the gravel path from the corner of the porch to the main entrance. He then took up our trip to London, explaining that the Chinamen had no doubt been uncertain whether I had the stone or had turned it over to him, and to avoid taking chances had decoyed us both. He referred to my offers of assistance in unraveling the case, and my failure to mention to him my suspicions regarding the Oriental perfume, or my taking of the cake of soap from the green room. He described Li Min's attempt to steal my satchel. Finally he spoke of the finding of the emerald in the cake of soap in my satchel and the weapon in the drawer of the dresser in my room.

I arose to be examined with a sinking heart. I knew that before now in the history of criminal trials many an innocent man had gone protesting to the gallows, and already I felt sure that, unless Miss Temple's testimony was decidedly convincing, I was certain of being held for trial as either an accomplice or the principal in Robert Ashton's murder.

I told my story without any hitch or hesitation. If my reasons for taking the cake of soap from Ashton's room seemed weak, I could only inform the Magistrate that they were, nevertheless, the ones which had actuated me. If my failure to speak of the matter to McQuade seemed suspicious, I could only say in reply that I had not thought it of sufficient importance to mention to him. I testified that I had last seen Miss Temple, on that fatal night, when she bade me good-night in the lower hall, and that I did not see her again until the next morning when she came into the hall in answer to my cries. I felt I had made a favorable impression, but I realized that the stern facts brought out by McQuade would need more than a favorable impression to overcome them.

At the conclusion of my testimony I requested that Li Min be called to corroborate my testimony as to the removal of the cake of soap from the green room. The Chinaman was already in the witness-room, but when brought into court maintained a stolid silence, and even the most strenuous efforts of an interpreter failed to elicit from him a single syllable. It was at this point that the court adjourned for luncheon.

CHAPTER XIV

MISS TEMPLE'S TESTIMONY

I REALIZED fully that the testimony of the morning had been heavily against me, but I would have gladly endured that and much more, could I have spared Muriel the coming ordeal. That she had evidence of importance to put before the court I well knew, yet whom could it possibly involve but herself? The Chinaman she could have no possible motive for screening, and her father clearly could not have committed the murder. The more I thought, the more I realized that logic pointed its inexorable finger at her, and the more strongly did the love I felt for her tell me the impossibility of such a conclusion.

I can not express the tenderness, the love, with which this girl, in our few brief meetings, had inspired me—I longed to take her into my arms and comfort her, and tell her that the whole thing was but a wretched, miserable dream. Yet it needed but a glance at the stone walls about me, the steel grating of my door, and the untasted food which stood upon the cot at my side, to assure me that this was indeed no dream, but a very cold and stern reality.

It was close on to two o'clock when I was once more taken back to the court-room. Miss Temple was nowhere to be seen. Major Temple sat in his former seat, pale and still. Presently there was a stir in the room and I saw Muriel entering, with Sergeant McQuade at her side and Inspector Burns following them. My heart sank as I saw how terribly pale and distressed she looked and with what shrinking she met the gaze of the many eyes now focused upon her. Her own sought the face of her father. He half rose, as though to speak, then sank back into his seat and covered his eyes with his hand. She did not see me at all—probably because I was so close to her.

The Magistrate rapped upon the desk to still the rising buzz of conversation among the spectators, and began his examination, quickly carrying it up through my conversation with Miss Temple the evening before the murder.

"What did you do then?"

"I retired to my room, dismissed my maid, and threw myself fully dressed upon the bed."

"What time was it?"

"Close to ten o'clock. I heard the hall clock strike the hour shortly after I reached my room."

"Did you go to sleep?"

"No. I thought and thought about the terrible situation I was in. At last I heard my father and Mr. Ashton come up-stairs, and shortly after heard my father retire to his own room. I made up my mind to make a last appeal to Mr. Ashton—to tell him under no circumstances to deliver the jewel to my father under the impression that I would marry him—that I would refuse to do so. I wanted also to ask him to give me back my letter and to release me from my unwilling promise.

He opened his door to my knock, and, fearing I might be seen or heard by some one if I remained standing in the hall, I entered. Mr. Ashton had evidently been examining the emerald, for I saw it upon a table. He had a pen in his hand, and was making a copy, upon a small piece of paper, of the curious symbol engraved on the base of the image. After stating my case in a few words, I demanded my letter. He was very angry and at first refused to believe that I was in earnest. Then he became very brutal and refused to release me. He even went so far as to attempt to embrace me, and only by threatening to rouse the house with my screams did I succeed in making him desist. Then I hurriedly left the room."

"Did you drop your handkerchief?"

"I must have done so. The one found in the room belonged to me."

"Did you by any chance observe whether or not any of the windows in the room were open?"

"I did. They were all closed. I noticed it instinctively, because when I first entered the room I was conscious of the heavy, oppressive atmosphere of the place and, knowing the room had been long closed, wondered that Mr. Ashton had not opened the windows. I suppose it was because his long stay in the East had rendered him sensitive to our cold English weather."

"After you left Mr. Ashton's room what did you do?"

"I retired to my own room, partially undressed and again threw myself upon the bed."

"Did you sleep?"

"No. I could not."

"When did you again leave your room?"

"About five o'clock. I had been thinking all night about leaving the house. I felt that after the scene the night before with Mr. Ashton I could not endure another meeting with him. I got up, put on a walking-suit and boots and, throwing a few things into a satchel, stole quietly down-stairs, opened the front door and went out."

"Where did you go?"

"I—I set out across the lawns, taking a short-cut to the main road to the town."

I OBSERVED that Miss Temple was showing a greater and greater appearance of distress as the Magistrate pursued inexorably the line of questioning which would lead her to the disclosures I knew she feared to make. Her face, white and drawn, twitched pathetically under the stress of her emotions; she spoke in a low, penetrating voice, little more than a whisper, yet so silent was the court-room that what she said was audible to its furthermost corner. As I gazed at her in silent pity I heard the Magistrate ask the next question:

"How far did you go?"

"I went—I—I think it must have been about thirty yards—as far as the corner of the house."

"The corner of the west wing?"

"Yes." Her voice was growing more and more faint.

"Why did you not go farther?"

"I—I saw somebody upon the roof of the porch."

"Was it light?"

"There was a faint light in the sky. I walked over toward the path, and looked up at the porch roof."

"What did you see?"

"I saw some one get out of the window from the hall, on to the roof. I—I—they walked over to Mr. Ashton's window and seemed to be trying to open it——"

"*Who was it?*" The crucial question of all that had been asked her came like the snapping of a lash, and as she comprehended it, her face became flushed, then ghastly pale.

"I—I—Must I answer that question?"

"You must."

"But—I—I can not——" She burst into sobs, and buried her face in her hands.

The Magistrate looked at her sternly. "Miss Temple," he said, "evidence has been given here this morning which points strongly toward a prisoner in this court as the person guilty of Mr. Ashton's death. Your answer to my question may confirm or disprove his guilt. I direct you to answer my question at once! Whom did you see upon the porch roof?"

Miss Temple looked despairingly about her, rose with a ghastly look from her chair, and, facing the Magistrate, said: "It—it—oh, my God—it was my father!" Then collapsed limply against the rail.

Major Temple rose from his seat and stood white and trembling. "Muriel!" he cried, in a voice filled with incredulous amazement and horror which rang throughout the whole room.

I sprang forward with outstretched arms, but Inspector Burns was before me. He placed Miss Temple tenderly in her chair. She was unconscious.

CHAPTER XV

THE VENGEANCE OF BUDDHA

WHEN Miss Temple launched her terrible and unwilling accusation against her father and was carried unconscious from the room, I realized that I was, to all intents and purposes, a free man. Miss Temple, it is true, had testified that the window was closed, but she could not know whether it was bolted, or whether Ashton had opened it later to secure fresh air during the night. It seemed probable that he had, but how to account for its subsequent rebolting from the inside I could not imagine, unless Major Temple had done it, unknown to me, when we first entered the room.

I looked to see all these matters cleared up when he was placed upon the stand, and I was not surprised to see one of the officers approach the figure sitting bowed and silent among the buzzing spectators and, laying his hand upon his shoulder, bend down and whisper a few low words into his ear. He arose and was about to accompany the officer to the dock, when there was a murmur of voices about the door and I saw Sergeant McQuade enter with the ugly figure of Li Min beside him, followed by the interpreter, while Inspector Burns stepped quickly to the Magistrate's desk and said a few hurried words to him in a low voice.

The Magistrate, apparently very much surprised, turned to the court-room, rapped loudly for order and motioned to the officer in charge of Major Temple to release him. Sergeant McQuade, meanwhile, with his prisoner, had advanced to the dock, and without further ceremony I saw the court attendants administer the oath, the import of this being explained to the Chinaman by the interpreter.

I LEARNED afterward that Li Min, upon his first appearance as a witness, had been under the impression that he was being tried for his attempt to steal my satchel, and as he did not then know that his compatriots in London had secured the emerald, feared to make disclosures. Learning from the interpreter during the noon-hour that the Emerald Buddha had been secured by his friends in London, he was at last persuaded to tell his story.

It seems that Li Min, like many of his countrymen, was under suspicion through association with the reform movement, and, knowing the enmity of the Dowager Empress and her advisors toward this movement, had come to Hong Kong with the intention of leaving the country. His engagement as a servant by Major Temple enabled him to leave China without being under any suspicions as to his motives for doing so. It was during the voyage to England, and his subsequent stay in Major Temple's service, that he first learned the story of the Emerald Buddha, piece by piece, and of Ashton's determination to secure the sacred relic. His religious feelings were outraged and he promptly sent word to the followers of Buddha in Ping Yang. But when the word at last reached them, Ashton had already escaped with the jewel. The priest set out at once for London with two of his followers, making such speed that they arrived in London some weeks before Ashton's coming.

Li Min was to notify them as soon as Ashton arrived and it would then be Li Min's part to admit his confederates to the house and with their assistance steal the jewel and make away with it. His trip to Exeter had been for this purpose, but owing to the furious storm the night of Ashton's arrival, he decided to wait till morning. He had overheard the quarrel, feared Ashton might leave with the jewel, and passed an uneasy night.

He arose about four o'clock and crept silently through the hallway to Ashton's door, hoping to find it unfastened. Upon finding it bolted, he had gone to the hall window, raised the sash and looked out. He made a quick decision to climb out upon the roof, enter Ashton's room by means of the window and secure the emerald. But fearing lest he might be recognized by some chance early riser among the stablemen or gardeners, he descended swiftly to the main hall, threw on a long, tan raincoat and tweed cap belonging to Major Temple and, so disguised, returned to the porch roof.

He was making his way quietly along to the window of Ashton's room when seen by Miss Temple. He found Ashton's window bolted on the inside, but the increasing light showed him dimly the interior of the room, with Ashton asleep in the bed. He had cut his hand badly upon a projecting nail or bit of glass, and had rested his bloody palm upon the sill, his fingers pointing inward. His efforts to open the window awoke the sleeping man within. What followed I will try to tell in Li Min's own words as rendered into English by the interpreter:

"I saw the man rolling about in his bed. He seemed to be suffering, and I heard him groan and once cry out in his sleep. I pushed the window again, and it made a loud noise. The man jumped up quickly and started toward the window. His face was white and terrible. And as he jumped from bed, the hand of Buddha, the Mighty, the Wonderful One, who knows all things, smote him like a flash of fire! He fell upon the floor, uttering a loud cry.

"I was frightened, and ran along the roof and climbed into the house through the hall window. I heard sounds in the room of the young man [Mr. Morgan]. I closed the window but forgot to bolt it. I ran quickly along the hall and went down the stairs. I put the coat and cap in the closet in the hall, where I had found them, and went out through the servants' entrance. I walked into Exeter and sent word to my brothers in London that the sacred relic had come. Then I had some breakfast and came back.

Afterward I learned that the jewel was I did not know whether the great Buddha had taken it away or not. At last the dead man was taken away and I was sent to fix the room. I searched everywhere, but I could not find the stone. At st the young man came into the room suddenly. After a time he took the piece of soap and went away. I was a fool—I had not thought of the soap, which lay there in front of my eyes. It was the only thing I had not searched. I knew that if Buddha had not taken away the stone, it must be concealed there.

"I watched the young man. I saw him put it in his bag. I went down-stairs, and when the satchel was left unguarded for a moment I took it. The young man and the officer were outside and stopped me. When I was taken into the jail at Exeter, my friend, Chuen Moy, came to see me. I told him through the bars what had happened. I did not know whether the young man would keep the stone or give it to the officer. I told Chuen Moy to go to London and inform our brothers that they might get the stone. I have done nothing wrong. The man who died had offended the great Buddha. He committed a sacrilege and he deserved to die. The mighty hand of the All-Powerful One was stretched out and he fell dead! I myself have seen the miracle. It is the vengeance of Buddha!"

I DO NOT know what the effect of this weird story was upon the others in the court-room, but to me it rang with all the accents of sincerity and truth. Not that I believed in the vengeance of Buddha, although even this I was not prepared to deny, but his story explained everything—and nothing. My heart gave a great leap of joy, for I knew that this terrible thing about Muriel's father, which she so firmly believed, must have almost broken her heart. Yet for me, she had told the terrible truth, as she believed it, and to save me she had gone all the way to London, to ask my advice. I began to hope that she might have for me a feeling not dissimilar to that which I so strongly felt for her.

Major Temple was put upon the stand again, but there was no evidence now to connect either Miss Temple, her father or myself with the murder. Li Min had borne out my story regarding the taking of the cake of soap in every particular. I was discharged, along with Major Temple and Miss Temple, and only Li Min remained in custody, held upon the technical charge of assaulting McQuade and threatening him with a deadly weapon. Inspector Burns and Sergeant McQuade both signified their intention of going to London at once—the latter, however, to come down to The Oaks the following day for a final examination into the mystery. He did not believe for a moment that part of Li Min's story which referred to the sudden death of Mr. Ashton, and still suspected the Chinaman of the crime.

I was requested by Major Temple to accompany him and his daughter back to The Oaks, an invitation of which I was by no means slow to avail myself. The poor girl was greatly upset, and very much tired out, and we made haste to get her home as quickly as possible.

I was given the same room I had previously occupied and we sat down to dinner with some show of cheerfulness, Miss Temple looking especially charming in a green silk evening-gown which to my artist's eyes made her a picture I longed to put on canvas. I told her so, and we were soon discussing pictures, and art generally, at a lively rate. Only the Major seemed depressed, and I imagine this came from his regret at the loss of the wonderful Emerald Buddha. What had become of the jewel I did not know, but I fancied that McQuade's hurried trip to London had something to do with the search his men were making for the lost underground temple of Buddha.

After dinner Major Temple excused himself upon the plea that he wanted to write some letters, while Miss Temple and I sat down before the fire in the library for our first real tête-à-tête. It had begun to rain heavily outside, with a stiff breeze blowing from the southwest, and it seemed wonderfully fine and warm and altogether delightful sitting here in the firelight with the woman I loved beside me.

CHAPTER XVI

I ASK MISS TEMPLE A QUESTION

"MISS TEMPLE," I said, as we sat beside each other on the big leather-covered settee facing the fire, "I want to thank you with all my heart for going up to London to see me. I know why you went and can never tell you how deeply I appreciate it."

She looked at me with her bewitching smile, which somehow made me feel both delightfully happy and yet vaguely uncertain of myself. "I had to come, Mr. Morgan," she said, her voice trembling with the agony of her former suspicions of her father. "As soon as I knew the police were fastening their suspicions upon you, I knew I should be obliged to tell what I had seen. Had I found you in London, I should have told you everything and been guided by your advice."

"I wish you *had* found me there," I said, "but as it is, everything has turned out well. Only I am sorry that you should have had to undergo such a terrible experience."

"Oh, it wasn't so bad. They gave me a very comfortable room at the police station in London, and the matron was extremely kind. I might almost have enjoyed the experience had I not been suffering so about my father." Her look of pain at the recollection made me change the subject and talk of London and my friends among artists and musicians.

"It's the life I've always dreamed of," she said, her cheeks flushing with excitement. "I've been to so many places, Rome and Paris, and Vienna and Cairo, and the East you know, but I really know very little about them. The outside I have seen, of course, but the real life—that I have missed. And now we are stuck down here, where we don't know anybody, because father fancies it is good for his health. I suppose it is, but it isn't real, joyous living. I hardly feel alive."

"But you go to London, don't you? Your father spoke of his house there."

"Oh, yes, but father's friends are mostly professors of Assyriology, and Egyptology and people of that sort, and they come and stay for hours and talk about scarabs and hieroglyphics and mummies and all that sort of thing. Sometimes I feel almost as though I were about to become a mummy myself!"

She certainly did not look it, with her wonderful color, and her large and brilliant eyes. I could not help looking deep into them as I replied, only half smiling:

"We must prevent that, at all costs. Let me help in preventing it." She laughed nervously, but did not seem displeased at my remark. "I think the experiences of the past week have caused us to know each other very well," I went on, gravely, "and I hope you may think as much of the friendship which has come to us as I do."

"Are we, then, really friends?" she said slowly. "I never had a man friend—nor very many of any sort, I fear. We have always moved about so much from place to place."

"Perhaps not friends," I said, and as I did so I placed my hand over hers, which lay beside me upon the leather seat of the settle. "At least not friends only. I have always dreamed, all my life, of a woman like you, who would be close beside me, and share all my hopes and dreams, and be the cause of them all as well, and be glad of my successes and not think the less of me because of my failures. But a woman to be all that must be more than a man's friend, Miss Temple—she must be his wife."

The color flooded her cheeks as I said this, but she did not draw away her hand. "A woman would have to be very greatly loved by a man, and love him very greatly in return, to be all that to him," she said.

"I can only speak for myself," I said. "I love you very greatly—so much, indeed, that I am telling you of it now—when I have the opportunity—instead of waiting, as no doubt you think I should. But we have passed through much trouble, you and I, and that has brought us close to each other. I want you, I need you, I love you, and I shall always love you!" I drew her to me, and when she put her head upon my breast I knew that I had found my heart's desire.

IT MUST have been half an hour later when Major Temple burst into the library in a great state of excitement and asked if we had seen anything of Boris, his favorite mastiff. He had suddenly realized, a few moments ago, that he had not seen him since his return from Exeter. He made inquiries, but none of the servants had seen the dog since the day before. I remembered at once the howling I had heard during the night and spoke of it. The Major thought for a moment, then raised his head with a sudden look of comprehension. "Don't you remember, Mr. Morgan, that Boris was with us when we made our examination of the green room last night? I do not recollect seeing him after that. The poor fellow has no doubt been locked in there ever since, and it was his howls that you heard!"

We followed him to the green room and Major Temple tried several keys before finding one that could open it. At last the lock turned, however, and he attempted to push open the door. It refused to open, and felt, he said, as though some heavy object had been placed against it. By pushing with our united strength we forced the door inward sufficiently to allow us to enter. The Major took a candle from my room and we squeezed our way into the place with some difficulty, Muriel remaining outside. What was our astonishment to see lying upon the floor, his head close to the door, as though struck down in an effort to escape, the Major's mastiff, Boris, stone-dead, his eyes wide open and staring, his mouth distended and still covered with foam, his face wearing an expression of intense fear!

It was a horrible sight, and we looked at each other in alarm.

"My ——!" said the Major. "This room is accursed! Let us go!"

CHAPTER XVII

I SLEEP IN THE GREEN ROOM

"WHAT is the matter?" asked his daughter as she saw our startled faces. "Isn't Boris there?"

The Major's tone was grave and solemn. "He is there, Muriel, and he is dead. I do not know what is the secret of that room, but I shall never enter it again!" He turned from us and led the way down the hall.

When we reached the floor below, the Major directed Gibson and one of the other servants to remove the dog's body from the room, and we retired to the library, where we discussed the matter for a long time. But in spite of our attempts to regard the event in a common-sense light, we could not shake off a mysterious feeling of dread at the thought of these two creatures, a man and a dog, having so inexplicably come to their ends in this room. In Ashton's case there was tangible evidence of the cause of death, but on the dog's body there was no wound or mark of any sort.

Miss Temple essayed a few airs upon the piano, but our thoughts were not attuned to music, and presently, as it was close to eleven o'clock, she said good-night to us both and left us. I seized the opportunity to tell the Major of my love for his daughter, and, after his first gasp of surprise, he heard me out with remarkable calmness, though there was a frown upon his forehead.

At the mention of my profession and my income I noticed that Major Temple's frown relaxed somewhat, but when I mentioned my father's name and the fact of his having spent a part of his life in India, he fairly beamed.

"Are you really the son of Edward Morgan?" he cried, rising. "Why, my boy, I knew him well! I was in the Indian service for fifteen years, and who did not know him, who has spent much time in that benighted country? He was a fine man, and, if I remember rightly, he refused a knighthood for his services." He came up to me and took my hand.

"It's all very sudden, I must say, but I should be very glad to see Muriel happily married, and if she believes you to be the right man, I shall interpose no objections. But I should advise you both wait a reasonable time, until you are certain that you have not made any mistake. As for me, I am an old man, and I have traveled all over the world, but the only real happiness I have ever found was in the love of my wife. She went out to India with me, and she never came back." He turned and gazed into the fire to hide his emotions.

"I have become half mad over this business of collecting antiquities and curios," he resumed presently, "but it isn't real—it's only an insane hobby after all, and I have only just realized how selfish it all is."

AS I STOPPED at my doorway, I noticed that the door of the green room stood partly open, and, filled with a curious fascination, I once more peered into its dark and silent interior. I could see only the faint outlines of the tall, old-fashioned bed against the dim light of the sky without the windows. I stepped inside, acting upon the impulse of the moment, and lit one of the gas-jets in the heavy, old-fashioned bronze chandelier.

The room seemed comfortable enough, though I felt that peculiar stifling sensation I had noticed upon my first entering it. I wondered for the thousandth time what strange secret lay concealed within its walls —what mysterious influence existed which was potent to strike down man or beast alike without warning, as though by the hand of death itself. I longed to penetrate to the heart of this mystery—to satisfy myself that what had occurred herein had not been supernatural, but merely some working of well known natural laws.

Suddenly I was seized with an idea. Why should I not spend the night here and possibly thus determine the grim secret? The idea grew upon me so strongly that I at once returned to my own room, undressed, put on my pajamas and, taking a small pocket revolver, crossed the hall into the room opposite, carrying with me some extra coverings for my bed.

I did not feel at all sleepy, so, after closing the door and climbing into the high poster bed, I lay back comfortably upon the pillows and proceeded to occupy myself in reading a magazine.

CHAPTER XVIII

A NIGHT OF HORROR

THE night was in many ways like the one Robert Ashton spent there. A heavy rain had set in, and the wind from the southwest was driving it against the windows of the room, just as it had done that other night. I had attempted to raise one of the windows before turning in, but it was impossible to keep it open for any length of time as the rain drove in fiercely and threatened to flood the room. I began to reconstruct in my mind the scene that had been enacted in this room but a few nights before—the stormy interview with Muriel, the hiding of the jewel in the soap and the use of her forgotten handkerchief for catching the flakes dug out by his penknife.

Then, I thought, what next? No doubt Ashton had turned off the gas and climbed into bed. I say climbed advisedly, for the bed, one of those old-fashioned four-posters with a feather mattress under the hair one, was far higher from the floor than are our modern beds, and to facilitate getting into it there stood beside it a little low, wooden stool, by which one ascended to its snowy heights.

Presently, over my imaginings, I felt myself growing unaccountably sleepy and tired. I realized that the strain of the long day had been a heavy one, and I could see no reason for going without a good night's rest. There was no priceless jewel concealed upon the premises to bring down upon me either the vengeance of Buddha or the murderous attacks of my fellow men. I laughed a little at my earlier fears as I rose in bed, reached over to the chandelier and turned out the light.

I must have slept for several hours, during which I tossed about, a prey to broken and tortured dreams. I seemed to be struggling to free myself from a huge soft object which lay upon my chest and threatened to strangle me. In a madness of fear I half awoke, trembling and weak, and, with a cry, thrust the imaginary body from me and sprang to my feet in the bed.

I saw nothing but the faint light of the window opposite me, and with a mad desire for air I sprang violently forward, my right foot, as I lurched heavily outward, coming down upon the wooden stool by the side of the bed. And as I thus dashed headlong in the direction of the window, gasping desperately for breath, I suddenly felt a violent glancing blow upon the side of my head that shook me to the very marrow and stretched me stunned and unconscious upon the floor.

THE process of coming back seemed to take an age, yet I know now that it could not have been more than a few brief moments. When at last I opened my eyes I was intensely weak and still gasping madly for air. I seemed unable to breathe—my lungs and heart seemed oppressed as though by heavy weights. Slowly and painfully I struggled to my knees and raised my hand to my head, which seemed ready to burst with pain. It came away dripping with blood.

The sudden shock of the realization that I was wounded, together with the sharp pain the touching of the wound gave me, roused me to the necessity of quick and sudden action. I tried to rise, but my legs seemed made of stone—I fell over upon my side and then began to crawl laboriously and painfully toward the door. The choking sensation increased every moment—for a time I thought I should never be able to reach it, and then I thought of Muriel and all the future held for us, and I made a last terrible effort, dragged myself across the few feet remaining between myself and the door and, with barely enough strength left to reach up and turn the knob, managed somehow to fall across the threshold and into the hall.

I fell with my head and most of my body in the passageway and must have again become unconscious. When I once more revived I no longer felt the horrible sensation of choking that had before oppressed me, and I attributed this to the cold air of the hall. I felt very weak, and my head was lying in a pool of blood, but my senses were fairly clear and I knew that I must regain my room and attempt in some way to stop the flow of blood.

After some difficulty I managed to rise and stagger into my room and to find a wax taper and light the gas. A look into the mirror caused me to shudder—my face and the entire right side of my head were a gory mass of blood. I brought myself to some appearance of humanness and bound up the wound. It proved to be a long irregular gash, extending from near the temple down almost to my right ear.

Returning cautiously to the green room, I entered and looked about me. The light from my own room and the gray signs of dawn without enabled me to see that it was empty—there was no silent figure crouching within, waiting to deal me another deadly blow, nor had I expected to find any. I took one look about, seized my watch from the table and fled.

But when I left that chamber of horrors and closed the door behind me, I knew how Robert Ashton had come to his death.

ON RETURNING again to my own room I glanced hurriedly at my watch. It was nearly six o'clock and I lay down upon the bed to rest. Presently I fell asleep, from pure exhaustion, and did not awake until I was aroused by a tapping at the door. It was after ten o'clock and one of the maids had brought up my breakfast upon a tray. I sent word by her to Major Temple, requesting that Sergeant McQuade be asked to postpone his final examination of the green room until I had seen him. In somewhat less than an hour I had managed to get myself into fairly presentable condition and, with my head bound up in towels that looked for all the world like an Eastern turban, I slowly descended to the main hall and entered the library.

Major Temple was standing with his back to the fire, talking earnestly with the detective. As the former caught sight of my pale face and bandaged head he sprang forward and took my hand, "Good ——, Mr. Morgan!" he cried. "What's wrong with you?"

I tottered unsteadily to a seat and laughed. "Nothing much, sir," I replied. "I had a bit of an accident."

"You look rather done up, sir," said Mc-

Quade as he examined me searchingly. "Has Buddha been at work again? Major Temple has just been telling me about his dog. I've handled many cases, but this one beats them all for uncanniness and downright mystery!"

"I know how Robert Ashton was killed," I said, "and I'm pretty sure I can explain the death of the dog as well. In fact, you came very near having a third mystery on your hands this morning, Sergeant," I smiled grimly.

"What do you mean?" they both of them cried together.

"I slept in the green room last night," I replied, "and the thing that did for poor Ashton came very near doing for me as well!"

"You slept in the green room?" gasped Major Temple in amazement. "What in the name of heaven did you do that for? Explain yourself, man!" he went on, somewhat testily. "What happened? Tell us about it, can't you?"

"I can and will," I said slowly, "but not here. We must go there before you can fully understand."

"Come on, then!" said McQuade, and they both started toward the door.

At that moment Muriel came in with a happy smile, which was replaced by a look of deepest concern as she saw my bandaged head. "Why, Owen!" It was almost the first time she had called me by my Christian name and it made me feel wildly happy in spite of the racking pains in my head. "What on earth is the matter? Are you hurt?"

"Not much," I managed to reply. "Just a bit of a cut. I slept in the green room last night and, as I was telling your father, I managed to find out the secret of Mr. Ashton's death."

"You—you slept in that room?" she cried, turning a bit white. "Why—you—what could you have been thinking of?"

"Don't think about it," I said, patting the hand she had placed upon my arm. My realization of her concern, her love, her fears, because of my possible danger, filled me with joy. "We are just going there now, and I hope to explain just what happened."

As we followed the others up the stairway she took my arm and pressed it gently, and the look she gave me repaid me many times over for all the horrors of the night just past.

A pool of blood on the floor of the hall still gave mute evidence of the experience through which I had passed. Muriel shuddered as she looked at it, but I hurriedly pushed open the door and bade the others enter. I had no desire for further sympathy, nor did I wish to bring about any dramatic climax. We all entered, the Major and Muriel looking about fearsomely as though they momentarily expected some unseen figure to rise and confront them, weapon in hand. When they were all inside I closed the door.

"The weapon that fractured Mr. Ashton's skull," I said, "has been in plain view of every one, ever since the morning his death was discovered. There it is!" I continued quietly, and pointed to the heavy bronze chandelier which hung from the ceiling close to the side of the bed.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SECRET OF THE GREEN ROOM

THEY all looked a bit non-plussed and nobody said anything for several moments. Then McQuade asked, in his quiet voice, with a shade of comprehension in his tone: "How do you make that out, sir?"

The chandelier was an old-fashioned one, originally made, I fancied, for a room with a somewhat higher ceiling. The ceiling here was unusually low, and the extreme lower end of the chandelier extended to a point not much over six feet from the floor. It hung about three feet from the side of the bed and consisted of a heavy central stem and, extending from its lower end, four elaborately carved branches. Below the point from which these four arms sprung was a sort of circular bronze shield, and from the lower face of this projected an octagonal ornamental spike, about two and a half inches long, terminating in a sharp point. Almost directly beneath it, but somewhat nearer to the side of the bed, stood the low bench or stool not over five inches high, the use of which I have already mentioned. I explained the tragedy to the detective and the others as I knew it must have happened.

"Last night," I said, "I was unable to open a window because of the driving rain. The same condition existed upon the fatal night Mr. Ashton spent here. For some reason, which I hope to explain presently, we were both nearly suffocated while asleep and rose suddenly in bed, with but one thought, one desire—to get a breath of fresh air. The window directly opposite the bed attracted us—in Mr. Ashton's case, no doubt, the face of Li Min peering in from without increased his terror. Like myself, he sprang up and dashed toward the window, placing his right foot, as I did, upon the low stool beside the bed.

"His first dash, like my own, brought his head, elevated by the height of the stool, in contact with the spike upon the lower end of the chandelier with great force. The spike entered his head, fracturing the skull. He was a taller and heavier man than myself and the force of the contact as he sprang forward and upward must have been terrific.

"In my case, owing to my having jumped from the bed at a slightly different point, I struck the spike only a glancing blow, sufficient, however, to render me unconscious for several minutes. I fell to the floor, senseless, but in a short time I struggled to my knees and managed to escape from the room. The interval, from the time I first fell to the time I reached the hall and again became unconscious, must have been very short."

"Why?" asked McQuade.

"Because had the time been very long you would have found me here this morning, as Ashton was found."

"But why?" asked Major Temple.

For answer I took a box of wax tapers from my pocket. "Look," I cried, as I held a match out before me, where it burned with a bright, clear flame. I slowly lowered the taper until it reached a point a few inches above my knee, and its flame slowly faded away and then suddenly went out, as though the match had been plunged into a basin of water.

McQuade gave a significant grunt. "Carbonic acid gas!" he said. "But where does it come from?"

"THAT I do not know," I said, "but I think there should be no great difficulty in finding out. This room has been closed for a long time. Even when Mr. Ashton came here, it was opened for only a few moments. Neither he nor I opened the windows, because of the rain, as you know.

"Somehow, just how I can not say, a slow stream of carbonic acid gas finds its way into this room. It is the product of combustion, as you of course know, and is produced in large quantities by burning coal. It may come through the register from the furnace, or from some peculiar action of partially slaked lime in the plaster of the walls. Being heavier than air, it slowly settles to the floor, where it collects."

I tore a few sheets from the magazine I had been reading the night before and, lighting them with another match, extinguished the flame but allowed the smoke from the smoldering paper to spread about the room. It slowly sank until it rested upon the surface of the heavy gas, like a layer of ice upon the surface of a body of water. It showed the carbon dioxide to be considerably over two feet deep and some six or eight inches below the level of the top of the bed. I knew it must have risen higher during the night, as it was its deadly fumes that caused my troubled dreams and the feeling of suffocation. A considerable portion of the gas had evidently flowed out through the open door after my escape from the room.

"And that is what killed poor Boris!" said the Major.

"Exactly," I said, "and probably Ashton as well. The surgeon at the inquest reported that the fracture was not sufficient, of itself, to have caused instant death. It was ten minutes or more, I should say, from the time I was first awakened by Ashton's cry until we finally broke in the door. By that time he had suffocated."

"I believe your explanation of Mr. Ashton's death is the correct one, Mr. Morgan," said McQuade, and he said it ungrudgingly. He walked over to the chandelier and examined its ugly looking spike with deep interest. It was stained with dried blood, and a few bits of hair still clung to it, but whether Ashton's or my own of course we could not tell.

There seemed nothing further that we could do, and as McQuade intended going into Exeter to make his report and have the authorities make an examination into the cause of the carbonic acid gas, I suggested that I accompany him, as I wanted to get my wound dressed without delay.

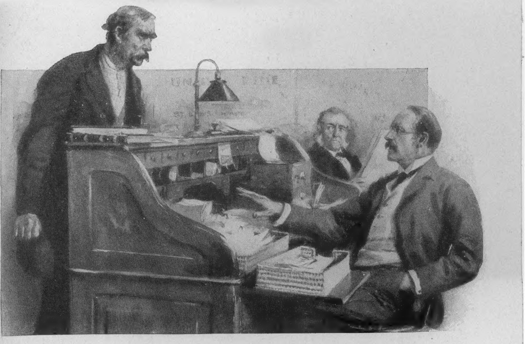
ON THE WAY McQuade told me about his attempts to locate the much sought emerald. It appears that the Chinamen, in taking us from the house in Kingsgate Street, had passed through an areaway back of the house and thence through a gateway in the rear wall into a narrow court, along which they had proceeded some distance. From here they had entered the rear of a house facing upon the adjoining street, to which the cellar belonged. They had all, however, completely disappeared, and left hardly a trace of their presence. No doubt by now the Emerald Buddha was far on its way toward the little shrine in Ping Yang, carefully secreted among the belongings of the old temple priest. I felt a sort of secret satisfaction at learning this, and I think Sergeant McQuade did as well. Certainly its possession could have brought nothing but trouble and danger to all of us.

I had six stitches taken in my head and drove back an hour later after saying good-by to the man from Scotland Yard. I received a letter from him later with reference to the investigation which the authorities made into the cause of the carbonic acid gas. It seems that the heating system in the house had been installed by its former occupant and owner, a native of Brazil, unused to our cold English Winters. The pipe for the green room led directly from the combustion-chambers of the furnace instead of from a hot-air chamber and thus carried away from the furnace great quantities of carbon dioxide, produced in the combustion of the coal.

An old valve in the pipe showed that this source of supply could be shut off when so desired, and from this I judged that the owner of the house may have had the piping intentionally so constructed, with the idea of putting out of the way some undesirable friends or relatives. That such was actually the case seemed borne out by the rumors of at least two sudden and mysterious deaths which were known to have occurred in the house. I had noticed the register the night I slept in the room, and presume it had been turned on by Mr. Ashton.

I REACHED the house about four o'clock and found Muriel awaiting my return in the library. Her father, she told me, had gone off for a walk. We had a great deal to say to each other, and it took us till dinner to say it, but I have an idea that it would not interest the reader particularly. We had a lively party at dinner and the Major got out some special vintage champagne to celebrate our engagement and drink to our future happiness. It was late before I turned in, and I did not, you may be sure, sleep in the green room.

Here ends the story of the Emerald Buddha and the memorable week it caused me. It has now been three years since Muriel and I were married, and they have been three years of almost perfect happiness. We think of making a trip to China, some of these days, and if we do, we have concluded to make a special pilgrimage to Ping Yang and place upon the altar of Buddha the most beautiful bunch of flowers that money can buy, as a little testimonial of our appreciation of what he has done for us.



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